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ANARCHO-SYNDICALIST REVIEW
#80 SUMMER 2020 \$5.00

ALSO IN THIS ISSUE:

AN ELECTION IN HELL

UNDERSTANDING SOUTH AFRICA'S
INCOMPLETE LIBERATION

ANARCHISM, MARXISM
AND THE LESSONS OF
THE PARIS COMMUNE

CHILE'S
UNCONTROLLABLES

CAPITALIST BRUTALITY

THE PRESS' WAR
ON WORKERS

CORONAVIRUS STRIKES

Industrial Workers of the World Preamble

(as amended 1908)

The working class and the employing class have nothing in common. There can be no peace so long as hunger and want are found among millions of working people, and the few, who make up the employing class, have all the good things of life.

Between these two classes a struggle must go on until the workers of the world organize as a class, take possession of the earth and the machinery of production, and abolish the wage system.

We find that the centering of the management of industries into fewer and fewer hands makes the trade unions unable to cope with the ever growing power of the employing class. The trade unions foster a state of affairs which allows one set of workers to be pitted against another set of workers in the same industry, thereby helping defeat one another in wage wars. Moreover, the trade unions aid the employing class to mislead the workers into the belief that the working class have interests in common with their employers.

These conditions can be changed and the interest of the working class upheld only by an organization formed in such a way that all its members in any one industry, or in all industries if necessary, cease to work whenever a strike or lockout is on in any department thereof, thus making an injury to one an injury to all. Instead of the conservative motto, "A fair day's wage for a fair day's work," we must inscribe on our banner the revolutionary watchword, "Abolition of the wage system."

It is the historic mission of the working class to do away with capitalism. The army of production must be organized, not only for the everyday struggle with capitalists, but also to carry on production when capitalism shall have been overthrown. By organizing industrially we are forming the structure of the new society within the shell of the old.

Principles of Revolutionary Syndicalism (EXTRACTS)

Adopted December 1922 by the

Berlin Congress of the International Workers Association (AIT)

I. Revolutionary Syndicalism, basing itself on the class struggle, seeks to establish the unity and solidarity of all manual and intellectual workers into economic organizations fighting for the abolition of both the wage system and the State. Neither the State nor political parties can achieve the economic organization and emancipation of labor.

II. Revolutionary Syndicalism maintains that economic and social monopolies must be replaced by free, self-managed federations of agricultural and industrial workers united in a system of councils.

III. The two-fold task of Revolutionary Syndicalism is to carry on the daily struggle for economic, social and intellectual improvement in the existing society, and to achieve independent self-managed production and distribution by taking possession of the earth and the means of production. Instead of the State and political parties, the economic organization of labor. Instead of government over people, the administration of things.

IV. Revolutionary Syndicalism is based on the principles of federalism, free agreement and grassroots organization from the base upwards into local, district, regional and international federations united by shared aspirations and common interests.

V. Revolutionary Syndicalism rejects nationalism, the religion of the State, and all arbitrary frontiers, recognizing only the self-rule of natural communities freely enjoying their own way of life, constantly enriched by the benefits of free association with other federated communities.

VI. Revolutionary Syndicalism, basing itself on economic direct action, supports all struggles not in contradiction with its principles – the strike, the boycott, the sit-in, and other forms of direct action developed by the workers in the course of their struggles leading to labor's most effective weapon, the General Strike, prelude to social revolution.

The Sam Dolgoff Institute

A group of anarcho-syndicalists, scholars and Wobblies are starting a non-profit educational institute similar to those that exist in other countries. We chose to name the institute after Sam Dolgoff because of his importance to both the anarcho-syndicalist movement and the IWW. Sam was a founding member of the *Libertarian Labor Review* collective in 1986 and contributed several articles to the magazine before his death in 1990. *Libertarian Labor Review* changed its name to *Anarcho-Syndicalist Review* after the first ten issues in order to make clear the magazine has no association whatsoever with the US "Libertarian Party" (libertarian was a name they had stolen from the anarchists). Activists wishing to contact the Sam Dolgoff Institute should email samdolgoffinstitute-group@office365.illinois.edu or through the ASR at anarchosyndicalistreview@gmail.com.

Mission Statement

Sam Dolgoff (1902-1990) was a house painter, father, husband, labor activist, historian and theorist who contributed to the anarchist movement for most of the 20th century. He was active in numerous causes, most especially the Industrial Workers of the World and the Spanish Revolution. He wrote many pamphlets and books, edited periodicals and anthologies, and wrote articles for the anarchist and IWW press. Sam's life's work was a combination of thought and action, all toward advancing the goals and ideals of anarchism and anarcho-syndicalism – human freedom,

ASR FINANCIAL REPORT: As this issue went to press we had received \$1,072.39 in subscriptions and literature sales since our last issue, and spent \$1,677.04 on printing, postage, website and bank fees. Generous donations to our Publication Fund brought in \$595.00, bringing total income to \$1,667.39 – or \$10.35 less than expenses. Our cumulative deficit has now inched up to \$171.00. We appreciate your continued support.

Our thanks for the following contributions to ASR Publication Fund: Robert Ratynski \$15; anon. \$100; Mark Alonzo \$10; Mark Nevin \$5; James Herod \$80; Mark Mancini \$5; Mike Long \$150; Peter Wilkin \$55; Ron Garner \$15; Bradley Bjorlo \$15; P.C. Jacobs \$15; Ridhiman Balaji \$100; Martin Comack \$20; R. Hartnett \$10.

Anarcho-Syndicalist Review (ISSN 1069-1995) is published three times a year. Editorial Collective: Jon Bekken, Mike Hargis, Mike Long, Iain McKay and Jeff Stein. Contributing Editors: Alexis Buss, Sid Pariss and Jeff Shantz. Founding Co-Editor: Sam Dolgoff (1902-1990).

Letters, articles, reviews, artwork and responses to articles published in ASR are always welcome. The copy deadline for #81 is Sept. 30, 2020. (If articles can be submitted electronically in .rtf, .doc or similar format, this would be appreciated.)

Subscriptions: US\$15 for three issues, \$20 to libraries and institutions, \$5 for prisoners for postage. (We cannot guarantee that prison authorities will admit the magazine.) Please add \$2 per year for international subscriptions. Checks should be made payable to Anarcho-Syndicalist Review. Please specify the issue number with which your subscription should begin. Bundles are \$3.25 per copy for three or more copies, \$3.00 per copy for ten or more.

ASR is indexed in the Alternative Press Index, available on microfilm through University Microfilm Intl's Underground Press Collection, and available in full-text databases offered by ProQuest.

Distributed by Small Changes and AK Distribution.

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Exchanges: ASR, c/o Mike Hargis, 937 Sherman Ave., Evanston IL 60202

self-management and direct democracy, mutual aid and solidarity, and equality and a classless society.

The Sam Dolgoff Institute brings Sam's ideas into the 21st century to present an anarchist and anarcho-syndicalist view of contemporary social concerns. First, the Institute will preserve and promote Sam's many contributions to literature about anarchism, anarcho-syndicalism, anti-fascism and critiques of Marxism and state socialism. Second, the Institute will support programs, events, and conferences that explore the relevance of anarchist ideas today. Third, the Institute will support publication of the *Anarcho-Syndicalist Review*, which chronicles contemporary anarcho-syndicalism internationally, and which Sam co-founded under the name of *Libertarian Labor Review*. Fourth, the Institute will issue occasional papers and publications to ensure broad access to contemporary anarchist and anarcho-syndicalist ideas and approaches.

Rebellion Sweeps U.S.

As this issue of *ASR* was getting ready for press a massive uprising against racism and police brutality erupted across the United States in the wake of the brutal murder of George Floyd in Minneapolis by cop Mark Chauvin on May 24. Led largely by black youth, multi-racial crowds ignored the dangers of possible contagion by Covid-19 to expose and confront the equally deadly plague of racist police violence that has taken the lives of so many black workers over the decades. Amadou Dialo, Oscar Grant, Trayvon Martin, Rekia Boyd, Laquan McDonald, Eric Gardner, Tamir Rice, Sandra Bland, Philando Castile, Eric Gray, Breonna Taylor, Amaud Arbery and on and on and on, all murdered by police or vigilantes because their killers considered their lives worthless.



In This Issue:

- 2 Announcement: The Sam Dolgoff Institute
- 3 **Editorials** Rebellion Sweeps U.S.
- 3 "Anti-Government Ideologues" & Coronavirus
by *Iain McKay*
- 5 **Wobbles** Folly of Craft Unionism, Destroying Food...
- 7 **Syndicalist News** Defending the Elderly, Farmworkers...
- 8 **Articles** Indigenous Peoples, Workers &
Environmentalists Attacked in Canada by *John Kalwaic*
- 9 An Election In Hell by *Wayne Price*
- 11 Understanding South Africa's Incomplete Liberation: An
Anarchist/Syndicalist Analysis by *Lucien Van Der Walt*
- 16 Mutual Aid & Solidarity Against the Covid-19 Crisis
by *Jeff Shantz*
- 17 Anarchy And Covid-19 by *Iain McKay*
- 22 In the Face of the Covid-19 Crisis: The International
Confederation of Labor (ICL-CIT) Mobilizes
- 25 Anarchism, Marxism and the Lessons of the Paris
Commune, Part I of III by *Iain McKay*
- 32 **Reviews** Chile's Uncontrollables by *Martin Comack*
- 33 Spanish Anarchists in the United States by *Jeff Stein*
- 34 Capitalist Brutality by *Ridhiman Balaji*
- 35 The Press' War On Workers by *Jon Bekken*
- 36 Sustainability or Greenwash? by *Jeff Stein*
- 37 Economic Planning as a Reconfiguration of Capitalism
by *Ridhiman Balaji*
- 39 Letters

editorial

Floyd's murder, viewed online and on television by millions, thanks to the courageous action of a 17-year-old who had the awareness to record the murder on her phone, was the final straw for many. Beginning in Minneapolis, demonstrations have spread to all 50 states and internationally. Not surprisingly, protests were often followed by rioting and widespread looting which the plutocratic press were quick to highlight and condemn. The bogeymen of the "outside agitator," "anarchists," "criminal elements" hijacking "peaceful protests" were trotted out, including by liberal and progressive politicians, to justify curfews and the harsh repression unleashed by police and National Guard. Still, people continued to come out on the street to denounce police brutality, racism, and social and economic inequality.

As this is written it has been 10 days since pig Chauvin murdered George Floyd and people are still in the streets from sea to shining sea, despite tear gas, pepper balls, flash-bangs, rubber bullets and even live ammunition (killing some) – even in the face of threats by Trump to send federal troops to crush the uprising.

We don't know how long this uprising will last or what direction it will take. All we know is that people are fed up with this miserable racist, capitalist, statist system. All that can be done is push it as far as the people are willing to take it and preserve any gains and lessons that come out of it. Stay tuned.

"Anti-Government Ideologues" and Coronavirus

For an anarchist, it is annoying to see the right – whether Trump or Johnson, the Tories or the Republicans – proclaimed "libertarians" or "anti-government." They are neither, not least because they are members of governments and so repeatedly and regularly use state power to further their own and their backers' interests.

Yet this does not stop the likes of economist and *New York Times* columnist Paul Krugman arguing that "we may not get the [stimulus] program we need, because anti-government ideologues, who briefly got quiet as the magnitude of the Covid-19 shock became apparent, are back to their usual tricks." (*Starve the Beast, Feed the Depression: Anti-government ideology is crippling pandemic policy*) Yet what are they actually doing? Krugman notes the following:

Everyone, and I mean everyone, knows what is really happening: McConnell is trying to get more money for businesses while continuing to shortchange state and local governments. After all, 'starve the beast' – forcing governments to cut services by depriving them of resources – has been Republican strategy for decades. This is just more of the same.

Which raises an obvious question: how is the politicians of a governing party seeking to funnel government money into the hands of business an example of "anti-government ideology" in action? In reality, it *is* government action and so these "anti-government ideologues" are responding to the crisis – they are using the government machine *they are part of* to funnel monies to the wealthy, to the capitalist class, to corporations. Yes, this is not what is required now. Yes, they are obstructing and squeezing out more sensible policies. Yes, they will cause vast suffering – but it is hardly "anti-government" when politicians use the bloody government to pursue their favored policies.

So how is a government bill which sought to give billions

to corporations “anti-government ideology”? How was the goal of giving the head of the federal government *carte blanche* over \$500 billion “anti-government ideology”? How is skewing government action towards favored sections of capital an example of “anti-government ideology”? Is it that flawed and self-interested government action is not really government action? Is it that the recipients of government largess determine its “anti-government” credentials rather than the fact of government action?

Simply put, the government having the wrong – whether subjectively or objectively – policies is not “anti-government ideology”: it is government action. Thus we have the frankly bizarre situation that many – including well-educated professors – view giving \$500 billion to corporations as an expression of “anti-government ideology” but giving an identical amount to the people would be “government intervention”! Strange...

Then there is this example of cognitive dissidence:

Early Monday Trump tweeted out an assertion that he has the power to overrule state governors who have imposed lockdown orders – which suggests that we may have a constitutional crisis brewing, because as far as anybody knows he has no such power. (*Economists Aren't the Ones Pushing to Reopen the Economy: On cronies, cranks and the coronavirus*).

Sadly, Krugman does not explain how seeking autocratic power and concentrating even more power into the hands of the head of the government expresses “anti-government” ideology, feelings or policies. Presumably, if Trump does indulge his authoritarian instincts and refuses an election or refuses to admit defeat and the Republicans back him then we would have an “anti-government dictatorship”? Presumably any citizen protesters shot by troops – or by pro-Trump activists – in such a scenario would be victims of “anti-government government violence”?

Or, to take another example, Trump using government power to force the meatpacking industry to open and to protect the companies from future lawsuits. Then there is the awkward fact that Trump and the Republicans have been very happy to increase funding for the armed forces, indeed they even want to add a new branch – Space Force! – to the armed might of the state! How is that the action of “anti-government ideologues”? Or is it a case of “in space no one can hear you rant about Ayn Rand” and so does not count?

In the UK we have to suffer comments like these on “the innate Tory distrust of collectivism and state intervention – which Johnson shares, whatever his rhetoric” (John Harris, “We can’t hide behind the bunting – let’s face up to what’s happened to Britain,” *The Guardian*, 12 May). This completely ignores the fact that the Tories have made state intervention against, say, trade unions a leitmotif of their administrations (one which Johnson vocally championed and, in his election manifesto, promised to increase). Does this mean laws regulating workers’ organizations and actions are not “state intervention”? What of the centralization of funding and control under Thatcher, which gutted the independence of local councils? Is that not “state intervention”?

The facts are the Republicans and Tories are opposed to the state acting even slightly in the interests of the population but in favor of it acting in the interests of the elite, the capitalist class and their various hangers-on. Yet anti-worker policies and interventions are still state intervention. So we must neither forget that the state intervenes all the time, for numerous reasons, nor that these “anti-government ideologies” will never refuse to use the state to protect capitalist property rights. Nor will they refuse to use governmental forces if people decide not to pay rent, utility

bills, etc. as a result of Covid-19 impacting their income. Nor let people act for themselves – they will send in police and troops if, say, homeless people take over a hotel or hospital staff take needed equipment from warehouses, private or public, without paying for it or getting permission from the appropriate bureaucrats.

That the right wants to limit state action to specific and very narrow sections of society does not mean government action is restricted or limited, for helping capital can be a very expensive business. Moreover, it increases state power, for it does not reduce the repressive functions which are its essence; in fact the powers of repression must be strengthened as free competition results in more discord and inequality. Thus the so-called paradox of “free market, strong state” is no such thing.

The government acting in the interests of business (or, at least, certain sections of it, as some bosses seem to be aware that dead workers cannot produce profits for them) is hardly “anti-government” – not least decreeing that capitalists cannot be sued by those (more correctly, their next of kin) who are infected as a result of being forced by necessity to go back to work. Still, this will not stop many on the left proclaiming elements of the right as “anti-government” or “libertarian” when the reality of the situation is clearly and obviously the opposite.

So in terms of left and right, the Situationists were correct: theory is when you have ideas and ideology is when ideas have you. Although, is it fair to call the right ideologues when they clearly have no ideas?

Still, the right are seeking with unseemly haste to kill workers to “save the economy,” or, more correctly, the profits, interest and rent extracted from labor. Yet the dangers of reopening without disease control or a vaccine can be seen at the Smithfield Foods meatpacking plant in Sioux Falls, USA. Its boss offered workers a bonus if they showed up every day in April to increase attendance and it worked. However, in a pandemic, this simply encouraged the sick to haul themselves into work and so the plan backfired. Hundreds of Smithfield employees were infected, forcing the plant to shut down for more than three weeks. Another example: A hairstylist from Missouri potentially exposed more than 90 customers and colleagues to coronavirus after going to work for a week with symptoms of the disease.

The right want to repeat the same mistake across the whole economy. It is no coincidence that Senior White House Economic Adviser Kevin Hassett called working people “human capital stock.”

Needless to say, genuine libertarians – libertarian socialists – are urging people to understand and follow the advice of the experts. This means the epidemiologists rather than the politicians who filter that advice. Likewise, we should be dismissive of others who claim a competency where none exists. So, for example, while many economists have been asked – often not even asked! – to talk about how to manage the pandemic, few – if any – epidemiologists have been asked about managing the economy. Which seems unfair, particularly as most economists understand how a real capitalist economy works about as well as the typical epidemiologist.

Which brings the relevance of libertarian tactics to the fore. Direct action and solidarity is what we need now. Solidarity with our fellow workers means self-isolating until it is deemed safe not to. It means direct action when it is not safe. As such we applaud the welcoming sight of workers walking out when faced with unsafe working practices during the current crisis. According to a *Guardian* report, dozens of employees at an American Apparel clothing plant in Selma, Alabama, took direct action on April 23

after two workers tested positive for coronavirus. The plant has remained open during the pandemic to manufacture face masks for a U.S. army contract. "We left for our own protection," said employee Norma Kennedy. "Beforehand, management said if someone tested positive they would shut down and have the plant cleaned. When workers tested positive, they didn't want to shut it down. They're not really concerned about the workers." Elsewhere, Ieshia Townsend, a McDonald's worker in Chicago, walked off the job in protest of the lack of hazard pay, proper personal protective equipment, paid sick leave and health insurance benefits: "Workers like me are going on strike because McDonald's and other billion-dollar corporations do not care about us as workers. They don't care if we're safe on the job, they don't care if we're sick on the job."

As anti-government – and anti-capitalist – theorists, anarchists should be encouraging such actions and arguing that the only genuinely safe way of opening the economy is through workers' control. Likewise, we need to resist the Trumpian death cult attempts to "open" the economy at the expense of working-class

Destroying Food as People Starve

Under capitalism food is grown not to feed people, but to be turned into cash. Insurance companies profit not by providing health care, but rather by throwing barriers in our way when we need treatment. We have an entire economy organized around profit – it matters not whether those profits are realized by providing useful goods and services, providing crap, or blocking people from accessing the necessities of life. As long as there's money to be made, it's "productive." And if there isn't, there's nothing to do but destroy the food, incinerate the medicines, demolish the homes.

Hunger has long been a problem in the United States, as around the world, but was exacerbated as the pandemic disrupted food processing and distribution systems even as millions lost their jobs. Lines at food banks grew and there were shortages in grocery stores even as farmers were plowing under vegetable fields, dumping milk and smashing eggs that could not be sold. Not since the Great Depression has so much fresh food been destroyed.

What Economic Recovery?

The covid pandemic is forcing attention to the fact that the so-called "longest" economic recovery was always a mirage. The number of poor neighborhoods in metropolitan areas has doubled since 1980, according to an analysis of US Census Data by the Economic Innovation Group, and existing low-income areas fell deeper into poverty. Nor can this be blamed solely on the Great Recession; an analysis by the *Philadelphia Inquirer* (May 17) found that across SouthEastern Pennsylvania, "eight out of 10 suburban residents lived in towns where median incomes either failed to keep up with the rate of inflation, or were flat" over the past decade.

This was before the pandemic hit. Across Southeastern Pennsylvania and neighboring New Jersey counties, 64% of households saw their inflation-adjusted income decline between 2009 and 2018. Some gained, of course, but as the *Inquirer* notes, "The spoils of the last economic recovery were selectively sprinkled onto the budgets of a small few in our region, as has been the case nationally." The number of poor neighborhoods increased dramatically as economic segregation spread; 24 million people now live in these high-poverty communities.

The Folly of Craft Unionism

In 1905, the Industrial Workers of the World demanded organization on an industrial basis, with all workers in the same industry

lives. We should be following the example of the medical workers who, in suitable PPE, protested the Astroturf "reopen the country" events. Solidarity, like mutual aid, in a pandemic is essential – profit-grinding is not and will get you killed. And we must never forget that there are better ways to help those workers who are suffering during the crisis.

To conclude: we must use a new, better, label to describe this. These words from the very first issue of *Freedom* (October 1886) are still appropriate:

To understand the Governmental application of *laissez-faire* learn the two following rules of thumb. 1. When the proprietors molest the proletariat, *laissez-faire*. 2. When the proletariat resist the proprietors, interfere to help the proprietors.

So a suggestion: how about replacing "anti-government" with "anti-worker"? This is a far more accurate label, not least because it resolves the apparent contradiction of "anti-government ideologues" being in the government and using it for their own goals.

— Iain McKay



organized into One Big Union that would act in solidarity with one another, rather than the AFL's craft unionism, which divides workers into small groups, each of which stands and is defeated alone.

More than a century later, too many unions are still mired in an AFL model of unionism suited, if at all, for conditions in the early 19th century. Advance Publications, which owns the Cleveland *Plain Dealer* and many other daily newspapers, has been trying to rid its newsroom of News Guild Local 1 for many years, building up a parallel nonunion newsroom to staff its online operation.

This year, Advance laid off the last four journalists working for the newspaper, which will now be filled with content from non-union Cleveland.com. Advance had been steadily shifting work there for many years, with the NewsGuild protesting but neither taking industrial action nor organizing those workers. Similarly, the production unions which print and distribute the paper allowed this union-busting to proceed. Is it any wonder that unions now represent only 6% of private sector workers in the United States?

100 Years of Lying for Profit

An analysis of ExxonMobil financial reports found that at least \$33.2 million was spent in recent years on propaganda against efforts to mitigate climate change, as executives did their best to condemn our fellow workers to global warming, flooding and general environmental catastrophe. (No doubt cleaning up the mess will add to GDP.) A century of lying for profit, with the assistance of paid propagandists (otherwise known as public relations hacks) dating back to the Ludlow Massacre more than a century ago.

From KKK to Police Surveillance

The founder of Banjo, a company selling spy equipment and software, was previously a KKK member involved in shooting up a synagogue. Now that he's a businessman, he claims to have put his racist views behind him and to be a sincere worshipper of money.

Are We Not Slaves?

Iowa says workers who fail to return to work out of fear of catching the virus will be considered a voluntary quit, disqualifying them from unemployment benefits. Employers are asked to rat out workers called back to work who declined until conditions were safe.

“Padrone di Merda” Worker Organizers Under Attack in Bologna, Italy

Precarious workers who refused to be swindled by their bosses were woken up by police officers May 18 in Bologna, and given notice of “precautionary measures” against them: five were ordered to leave Bologna and one was banned from approaching their ex-workplace and ex-bosses. Another 13 workers have also been charged.

The police showed up without gloves or masks and without respecting social distancing rules. When one worker complained, the police officer responded, to the amusement of his colleague, “Don’t worry, with this order you will end up very far away!” They are defying the same health regulations that they enforced with fines and charges during the lockdown.

Precautionary measures are issued by a judge and immediately enforceable without a trial, i.e. without any proof of “guilt.” It doesn’t matter that the workers have friends, partners and in some cases families in the city. It doesn’t matter that this further limits their precarious income. It doesn’t matter that we are in the midst of a pandemic, which limits mobility for public health reasons.

The authorities clearly don’t care about the virus spreading and the possibility of infection. From one hour to the next, those same workers who before couldn’t leave their homes now have to leave and go who knows where and for who knows how long. The same people who said they wanted to protect our health now show that they never really cared. The only health that interests them is the health of the bosses’ profits.

Who did these measures target? A worker in a social cooperative in Bologna, who has been forced to continue working throughout the lockdown for low pay and without adequate protection; a worker in a bar who was supposed to restart work that day; a partner in a small business that has refused to pass the crisis onto their workers and so has not received a single euro from the state or the local government; a student who, to pay their way through university, has had to work illegally; a rider who during the lockdown has been forced to work to earn money to get by. And a former employee of the Nails Café, which is at the center of the case, has been banned from approaching their ex-workplace or their ex-bosses. These bosses are guilty of not having paid thousands of euros in unpaid wages. The message to the workers is clear: let the bosses exploit and swindle you in peace.

What are they charged with? With harassing bosses who don’t pay their workers. Demanding your wages is officially called extortion! Going to your boss to protest against their fraud and harassment, thus upsetting their business, is officially called violence!

On the day of the reopening of many businesses after months of lockdown, the watchword is economic recovery, but the message is clear: this recovery is only for the bosses. Nobody cares about young people, precarious and exploited workers, who very often have not received a penny during this period. The economy made up of illegal and badly paid work has to recover quickly and, at a time like this, we are a problem for all bosses who are prepared to pass on the costs of the economic crisis to their employees.

When the institutions said #andràtuttobene (everything will be fine), we know what they meant: it will be fine for the bosses, the only people who are truly protected. That is why revenge against these bosses won’t stop. It is time to put our masks on again.

Germany: Seasonal agricultural workers force farm bosses to pay up

Creditors who took over the Spargel Ritter asparagus farm in Bornheim, Bonn, thought they could get away without paying what they owed the farm’s workers, but a campaign organized by the FAU syndicalist union forced them to pay up.

The trouble began two months before picking began, when creditors began bankruptcy proceedings against the farm’s owners. Migrant workers were already being hired, mostly from Romania. A February report described a rubbish-strewn mess where containers for worker housing were no longer being maintained and activity had been cut to the bone, a situation that certainly wasn’t going to improve when the creditors took over.

When workers arrived for the harvest in April, it turned out that administrator Andreas Schulte-Beckhausen had no intention of paying for the back-breaking labor he was imposing on 240 harvest workers who had travelled 1,800 miles to be there.

Workers expected to get paid May 15, but instead got a pittance of €100-200 – 3-7 Euros a day for leaving their homes to live 4-5 to a room in rubbish-strewn shacks next to a sewage treatment plant, with no guarantee of seeing the rest as creditors attempted to rinse the company for all it was worth. The new owners were cutting corners wherever possible, including providing food that was moldy and out of date, and not bothering to provide heaters, adequate sanitation, PPE or virus distancing measures. Safety was so poor that one worker was paralyzed.

More than 150 workers protested in the farm courtyard, making it clear they wouldn’t resume work without full payment.

The situation quickly escalated and when the FAU tried to send reps in – three workers were members – administrators attempted a full lockdown. Security were hired and Bonn police officers brought in as the bosses threatened to evict workers from the overcrowded containers being used to house them.

On May 19th harvest workers and union supporters marched on the Romanian Consulate to publicize their grievances, prompting news coverage and increasing pressure on Schulte-Beckhausen. A day later more money was forthcoming, but administrators attempted to stymie union oversight by dividing workers into groups of ten, bussing them out of the area, and only allowing FAU access to one vehicle. FAU Bonn Tweeted: “We have achieved our minimum goal: the workers are not bankrupt and have no prospect of being put out on the street. Now the legal battle begins.”

The Spargel Ritter workers’ demands include: 1) All workers be paid three months’ wages, based on 30 working hours per week, at €9.35 per hour. 2) All workers who wish it must be supported with a referral to other companies. 3) A return trip to their homes for all workers who wish to leave, with the employer covering the cost. In the case of workers who need this for medical reasons, the costs of health care must be covered. 4) All workers receive sick pay for sick days, at the regular rate of pay.

Wildcat Strikes Sweep U.S.

PayDayReport’s strike tracker has recorded over 260 wildcat strikes since early March, ranging in duration from a few hours to several weeks. They range from transit drivers refusing to haul police to break

France: Workers Seize McDonalds, Distribute Free Food

BY JOHN KALWAIC

In Saint-Barthélemy, France, workers at a McDonalds took over the building in order to distribute food. The workers formed a collective to distribute food to neighborhoods of north Marseille that have been badly hit by Covid-19. Unemployment is around 25%, while the national average in France is about 8.5%. In this area of Marseille more than a third of people live below the poverty line. When Covid-19 hit Marseille the already fragile economy became even more precarious, with workers being furloughed or laid off due to the quarantine. Social aid collectives began to form, and became some of the main organization giving people aid – so much so that government social services began referring people to them.

To help with the growing needs, workers at McDonalds in Saint-Barthélemy took over their workplace so the collectives could use the building and its walk-in cooler to distribute aid to the community. The move was backed by a number of collectives as well as the *Syndicat des quartiers populaires de Marseille* (Union of the Popular Quarters of Marseille). The fast food restaurant is also being used to prepare and distribute relief boxes which are brought to the front doors of residents. All these tasks are done while using gloves, masks and other PPE equipment.

Kamel Guémari, a member of the Force Ouvrière (Worker's Strength) union, said, "In this state of emergency, if we don't take action for our neighborhoods, who will?" McDonalds France has condemned the actions of the workers. A lawyer for the restaurant workers told *La Marseillaise* newspaper, "We would have preferred to do this with an agreement from McDonald's France, but they said no, citing liability. They are devoid of the slightest bit of humanity, so the workers just decided to ignore them."

McDonalds announced that it would reopen its drive-through

up protests, or their victims to jail, to meat packing and sanitation workers demanding safe working conditions and protective gear.

Apple packinghouse workers in Washington state's Yakima Valley struck six firms in May, *Labor Notes* reports, demanding safer working conditions and hazard pay. Yakima County has the highest rate of covid-19 cases on the West Coast.

Apple sheds line the streets of Yakima Valley's small towns. Inside these huge concrete buildings, hundreds of people work shoulder-to-shoulder, sorting and packing fruit. Illness can rapidly spread through the lines, and from workers into the surrounding towns. Packinghouse workers are almost entirely immigrants from Mexico, and their families comprise the heart of these areas. Most have lived here for years; jobs in the sheds are a step up from the fields, with year-round work at 40 hours per week.

The strikes are women-led, multigenerational and multiracial. According to Edgar Franks of Familias Unidas por la Justicia, "At the heart of the dissatisfaction of all these workers is the fact they are essential workers, but their pay does not reflect that."

Spain: CNT-AIT Fights for Elderly

Members of the CNT-AIT in Albacete, particularly its section at the Alábega residence for the elderly, are struggling against the Provincial Directorate of Social Protection of Albacete. Despite laws setting minimum standards for these facilities and an abundance of paperwork, basic needs were not being met even before the pandemic, and staff were being pressed to the breaking point. However, the covid-19 health crisis caused the precariousness that prevailed in this type of service to explode, and made it obvious



and home deliveries in April despite threats to employee health. Although resuming work would be "voluntary," Dramé, a member of *SUD Hôtellerie-Restauration* (Hotel and Restaurant Union) in Paris, noted that workers who refuse to go back to work will be tagged as enemies of management, and risk reprisals. McDonalds is known for retaliating against employees it considers "undesirable."

As far as returning to work is concerned, Dramé explains that "the kitchens are very small, it would be difficult to socially distance. Also, there is the issue of masks. The priority should be to give them to nurses who desperately need them." The priority of who gets masks should not be fast food establishments; rather, those buildings and their kitchens should be taken over to aid the needs of the community, as the workers of the Saint-Barthélemy McDonalds have done.

As the pandemic continues, governments and corporations around the world will push to reopen early. This may have disastrous effects on workers who have to work places that cannot have social distancing. This attitude might lead to another wave of Covid-19 outbreaks that will disproportionately hit blue collar workers and poorer communities. The existence of mutual aid groups in the wake of the pandemic has been a positive force in the wake of state and corporate neglect.

that everything relies on workers' efforts.

In fact in seniors' residences there is only one problem, which we may well call the infamous "geriatric management business."

Services have been cut to the bone in order to ensure the profitability of managing companies. The capitalist system and its individualist ideology have not only strengthened the state apparatus but have generated a degeneration of society, especially in the health and care sector, solidarity and mutual support.

As of March 26, of the 4,366 people who died in Spain, 1,517 lived in seniors' residences, for a total percentage of at least 37%.

The aging population has prompted an economic sector which sees increasing profits from exploiting the veterans of the working class. These centers are extremely profitable. International capital not only does not shy away from this kind of enterprise, but in has managed to find the formula to exploit workers for as long as possible – continuing to exploit them once they are no longer sufficiently productive and directly profitable.

The Albacete Syndicate of the CNT-AIT denounces the health trade and the multinationals of geriatrics, and we will fight so that our health is not a trade in the hands of companies, whether they are mutuals, private or state-owned companies. We are not going to allow them to amass their fortune with our blood.

Pakistan: Blockade Wins Reinstatement

Workers at the Suki Kinari hydro construction project signed an agreement June 2 with the China Gezhouba Group Company and local government officials to reinstate 1,600 construction workers, following a 12-day blockade of a highway leading to their worksite.

Indigenous Peoples, Workers and Environmentalists Attacked by Canadian Government, Energy Firms & Right-Wing Vigilantes

BY JOHN KALWAIC

In the last five months across Canada, indigenous peoples, workers and environmentalists have been fighting a common enemy, fossil fuel energy companies.

Three indigenous Wet'suwet'en tribe in British Columbia have been fighting the Coastal GasLink pipeline that is the government intends to place on Wet'suwet'en territory. The Wet'suwet'en are officially an autonomous nation within Canada. However, the council of hereditary chiefs has no legally recognized power according to the government, and Liberal prime minister Justin Trudeau decided to go ahead with the pipeline. Activists set blockades on railways across Canada in solidarity with the Wet'suwet'en. Canada's centralized rail system ensured that many of these blockades were effective.

Another struggle is happening in Regina, Alberta, where some 750 workers represented by Unifor Local 594 have been locked out at the Co-op Refinery since December for resisting management's attempts to cut their pensions and savings. Local 594 set up a picket line in Regina and a second picket line at another refinery in Carlsland, Alberta. The refineries are part of Federated Co-operatives Ltd., a wholesale and manufacturing firm owned by consumer cooperatives across Western Canada. The FCL has repeatedly rejected proposals from mediators to settle the dispute, demanding even deeper concessions.

Police have made dozens of arrests of Local 594 members and supporters under an injunction prohibiting picketers from slowing traffic in or out of the refinery facilities, and a judge has levied fines of \$250,000 against the union. While the union has called for a boycott, it has not picketed or called for strike action at other FCL-affiliated enterprises.

Many were outraged when the energy companies and Canadian government referred to indigenous protesters and their supporters as well as the union picketers as "illegal." Politicians from the Liberal and Conservative (Tories) Parties have both expressed their outrage at anything that disrupts business. Indigenous activists and union picketers have faced off against the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, which has repeatedly tried to take down pickets and barricades.

Despite widespread support, there has also been a backlash from Canadians who see the disruptions as an inconvenience, hold racist views against indigenous peoples, and subscribe to anti-union and anti-environmentalist ideologies. Right-wing groups are using vigilante tactics against indigenous environmental protests and union picketers alike.

On Feb. 5, far-right counter-demonstrators from the pro-fossil fuel industry group United We Roll and Yellow Vests Canada came to the picket line in Carlsland, Alberta, to harass picketers. The picketers allowed them through because they were only blocking Coop Refinery trucks, not farmers, residents or non-refinery trucks at the fuel terminal. Derek Emperingham, a shop steward for Unifor Local 594, said that 20 vehicles appeared in the convoy with two Co-op pickup trucks in the middle. UWR members used a megaphone to shout obscenities at the picketers, and posted on social media that they were standing up for the oil workers. "But in the end, they're standing up for the corporations and said that they stand with [FCL CEO] Scott Banda," Emperingham noted.

The FCL has tried to paint the union as an intruder, calling Unifor a "Toronto-based union," and Banda thanked the UWR for

showing up just days after a UWR member threatened to run over Unifor picketers on a Facebook post. Among the UWR members who have counter-protested the Unifor picket are people who push neo-Nazi propaganda and conspiracy theories like Q-Anon on social media.

On Feb. 19, right-wing vigilantes attacked and tore down a blockade set up by indigenous people at the CN Rail line just west of Edmonton, Alberta. The blockade was in solidarity with the Wet'suwet'en land defenders in British Columbia and was one of many throughout the country. The Edmonton RCMP, allegedly sent by the government for "public safety," stood by and watched as the vigilantes tore down the blockade.

Attacks and reactionary attitudes come not only from neo-fascist groups but also from the fossil fuel industries themselves. In February 2020 a leaked cartoon 'photo' was produced by Alberta-based X-Site Energy depicting what was intended to be teenage Swedish climate change activist Greta Thunberg being violently raped with the logo of X-Site Energy below. The image was initially to be put on hard hat stickers for X-Site Energy workers, but was leaked by an X-Site Energy employee. Thunberg came to Canada in 2019 as part of her tour of the Americas to lead student climate strikes and support indigenous groups, and was often the target of online abuse from fossil fuel industries and groups like UWR. Alberta resident Michelle Narang confronted the general manager Doug Sparrow of Red Deer Graphics, which works for X-Site Energy, about the image. He responded, "She is not a minor. She's 17 now," before weaseling: "That's not really what we meant." Red Deer then denied any knowledge of the stickers, and another graphics company, Velocity Graphics, which also make advertising for X-Site Energy said they were looking into the matter and suspended their business with X-Site.

Right-wing populists pander to elements of the white working and middle classes, but in the end they serve the interests of capital and the state. In Canada, many of the same political forces played out in 1990. In Oka, Quebec, indigenous Mohawks established an armed blockade because the mayor of Oka wanted to build a golf course on a Mohawk cemetery. Before the Canadian army and RCMP came to break up the blockade, white supremacist groups such as the "White Warriors" threatened to attack peaceful demonstrators who were in support of the Mohawk blockade.

Today many right-wing groups in Canada and in the United States have rebranded themselves as mainstream conservatives. In Canada, the Tories in many ways echo UWR talking points. The UMR, the YVC and Wexit (West Exit, which believes the western provinces should secede from Canada) try to hide their racism under the guise of protecting "Western Civilization" rather than overt white supremacy. Many of these groups also justify violent action in the name of preserving the "rule of law." Despite their populist rhetoric, they support state violence when the RCMP occupies Wet'suwet'en territory or when Regina police arrested Unifor picketers as they did once again on May 5.

When the state or moneyed fossil fuel interests attack workers, environmentalists, or marginalized groups these right-wing groups are silent or supportive of these attacks. Labor, indigenous people and environmental activists now face a three-way fight from the state, capital and the far right.

An Election in Hell

BY WAYNE PRICE

The United States is moving toward a national election in the midst of a collapse of world civilization. It is a disaster of an unknown duration, consisting of the covid-19 plague and the economic collapse it has triggered. Meanwhile the catastrophe of climate change continues to loom over everything. Whatever issues were previously important, the overwhelming concern now is how President Trump and his Republican Party have been dealing with the crisis. As any fair-minded observer will agree, their response has been disastrous.

The reaction of people on the Left has varied. Liberals take it for granted that they will vote for Democrat Joseph Biden for president to defeat the vile Donald Trump. Many, perhaps most, former supporters of Bernie Sanders, the self-proclaimed "democratic socialist," agree. Holding their noses, they will vote for Biden, although they will not "endorse" or "campaign" for him, they say. Others will not choose between Biden and Trump. Of these radicals, some (particularly those close to anarchism) will not vote at all, while others will cast a protest ballot for Howie Hawkins of the Green Party.

I am not going to argue here about what individual leftists should do about voting. I do not much care. The votes of a small number of radicals, out of millions, will not have an effect either way. This is especially true for most voters who live in "safe states," where the outcome is foreordained. (I live in New York State, where the electoral college votes are guaranteed for the Democrats.)

The real question is what radicals should advocate be done by progressive voters and organizations. What should the unions be doing about this and other elections? How do we suggest the African-American community should act? Latinx communities? other communities of color? LGBTQ groups? environmental organizations? feminist groupings? These forces are the base of the Democratic Party (which, like the Republicans, does not have a membership as such). Their organizing, mobilizing, get-out-the-vote activities, phone banking and donations of money have been essential to the functioning of the Democrats. Should they continue this strategy? Should they attempt to build a new, third, party? Or should they quit the electoral process altogether for a strategy of demonstrating, organizing, occupying and striking? As a revolutionary anarchist, I advocate the last.

President Trump

The United States is the richest and most powerful nation on earth, even if its relative power has been declining over the past decades. Its economy was highly profitable during the decade-long recovery from the Great Recession. It was "profitable" for the upper classes, not so much for most people; but there was a relatively high employment rate, even if jobs were shaky and low-paid. Economists, both conventional and radical, had been saying for years that the prosperity was brittle and vulnerable to a shock. Now we have had the shock and the capitalist economy has collapsed.

Worst of all, public health and the economy have been in the hands of a completely incompetent government – ruled by Donald Trump, a narcissistic, ignorant, fool, lacking all empathy let alone common sense. His stupidity and weak self-confidence make him disdain all scientific advisors. Vast numbers of people have died due to his inability to organize an appropriate response to the plague.

It is tempting to see Trump as an accidental freak. Then, when

he is voted out, things will return to "normal." This is exactly how Biden presents matters, but it is dangerously misleading. Trump is solidly supported by his party despite his compulsive lying. Republican governors are as dangerously ignorant as Trump in regard to health care and other issues. About 40% of voters support Trump no matter what he does. Big business, while never wild about Trump, likes much of his, and his party's, policies: enormous tax cuts for the rich, deregulation, reactionary judges, etc. These "conservative" forces will not go away, even if the Democrats take over the White House and both houses of Congress. They will be a constant threat – and a temptation for the Democrats to compromise with, as they have repeatedly done in the past.

This is not to say that Trump or Trumpism is "fascist" (or "neo-fascist") as many do. Undoubtedly, there are fascist traits in this administration and its supporters (including a crazed minority which does identify as Nazis). Trump is authoritarian, refuses oversight by the legislative branch, sneers at the courts, attacks and denigrates most of the media, and undermines the professionalism of the executive branch. Against the states, he declares that he has "total" power. He whips up his supporters with nativist and racist rants. He panders to the most right wing and hysterical part of his base and refuses to directly criticize the outright fascists.

For all that, he does not have an independent organization of violent gangs, such as Hitler's stormtroopers or Mussolini's fascists. And he can be voted out of office, which no fascist would let happen. He might wish to be president-for-life, but the military, political and business establishments will not let him. They are not (yet?) at a crisis where they might accept this, nor would they want such a ditzzy incompetent as ruler.

Sanders the "Socialist"

Many radicals had high hopes for the Bernie Sanders campaign. He called himself a democratic socialist and advocated a "political revolution." The Democratic Socialists of America went all out for him. And Sanders did astonishing well for a "socialist." He won in a number of states, getting a great deal of support from young people, from workers, and from Latinx. However he was never going to be allowed to win the nomination (let alone the presidency). The Democratic establishment pulled together all the "moderate" candidates and made a bloc behind Biden. Sanders was never able to win the African-American vote (especially older people). A similar steamroller ran over the other "progressive" candidate, Elizabeth Warren. The capitalists were, if anything, even more hostile to her than to Bernie, due to her history of backing strong regulation of banks and other businesses. She had to go.

In any case, Sanders was never much of a "socialist." He did not call for the expropriation of any section of big business. He did not propose to replace corporations with a non-profit cooperative system of production. His model of "socialism," he repeatedly stated, was the Nordic (Scandinavian) countries or the U.S. New Deal. That is, capitalist, market-driven, profit-oriented economies with government regulation and a high level of social welfare. Whatever the virtues of this program, it is inadequate to deal with the fundamental crises which the system is facing.

None of the socialist leaders who backed Bernie discussed the dismal history of socialist governments that were elected to office. There was Mitterand in France, Allende in Chile, and recently Syriza in Greece, Lula's Workers' Party in Brazil, Evo Morales in Bolivia, not to mention the current woes in Venezuela. These and many other examples (the various Labour Party governments in Britain) show that it doesn't end well for socialists to be elected to

take over a capitalist state and its capitalist economy. The socialist regime may be undermined by the established state bureaucracy or by the ruling rich's control of the economy (such as an investment "strike"), causing enough chaos that the regime is voted out, or the regime is intimidated into accepting the capitalists' demands (Syriza), or, if "necessary," the socialists are overthrown by the military or fascist forces (Allende). Even if Bernie had been elected, very likely he would have been stymied in his progressive programs, making him ineffectual. As anarchists have long argued, we cannot reach socialism (however defined) by using the state.

What is significant is that a large minority of the U.S. population is attracted to "socialism," while others were willing to support a "socialist," whether or not they agreed with the label. To the extent that young people put a clear meaning to the term, they have been taught to mean reformist state socialism. But the possibility of attracting them to revolutionary anarchist-socialism is there.

Joe Biden

Joseph Biden was an uninspiring politician who lost two earlier tries at the presidential nomination. His memory was poor and he was prone to "gaffes," which are worse now in his seventies. He told lies to look good (such as claiming to have been arrested for trying to see Mandela in South Africa). For such reasons, he did poorly in the early stages of the nomination process and was outshone by younger, more inspiring "moderate" candidates. His only strengths were his name recognition, the image (true or not) that he had the best chance of beating Trump, and that he had been Barack Obama's vice president. But the Democratic establishment decided that the "moderates" had to rally around one person in order to keep Bernie out. They decided that Biden was good enough. All the other "moderates" capitulated to him. Eventually even Warren, the "progressive," and Sanders, the "socialist," did so too.

Supporting a "lesser evil" means admitting to yourself that you are supporting an "evil," which is psychologically hard to do. So many liberals are trying to persuade themselves that Biden is really not so bad, even pretty good. They note his progressive words, his appeals to Sanders' and Warren's bases, his admitted changes in political stances. As he had once made friends with segregationist Democrats and reactionary Republicans, now he was trying to make up to liberals. How sincere any of this is is impossible to say. After all, an opportunist may swing left as well as right, so long as it is not too far left.

I am not going to go over the record of Biden as pro-corporate business, pro-military intervention, pro-racial inequality, misogyny, and generally pro-status quo. (For a full record, see Nathan Robinson's *Current Affairs* article, "Democrats, You Really Do Not Want To Nominate Joe Biden.") Just for example, after pushing Bill Clinton's repressive crime bill through the Senate in 1994, Biden cheered, "The liberal wing of the Democratic Party is now for 60 new death penalties [and] ... 125,000 new prison cells!" While Biden talks a good game about the climate crisis, he was part of an Obama administration which vastly increased fracking and other forms of carbon energy production. As the radical Kevin Zeese says,

Biden is someone who has been on the opposite side of every issue I have worked on for 40 years – the drug war, mass incarceration, racist police enforcement, marijuana prohibition, the Iraq War, militarism and every war of my lifetime, student debt, climate change, energy policy, racism, and desegregation, shrinking Social Security, corporatism... I can't think of anything significant that I agree with him on.

(April 17, 2020; Actiongreens email discussion)

Zeese said he will vote for the Green Party candidate.

The only real argument for electing Biden is that he is not Trump. It is that Trump, while not a fascist, is not simply another bad Republican. That he is something way outside the box, whose politics intersect with a freakish personality to be exceptionally dangerous in a time of extreme crisis. Many respected radicals have made this claim.

However, it is also true that the Democrats have had their part in creating Trump and Trumpism. Look again at the historical record. Reactionary Republican presidents have repeatedly been followed by moderate Democrats, who have been followed by an even worse reactionary Republican. Again and again. Nixon by Carter by Reagan-Bush by Clinton by Bush by Obama by Trump. In no case has electing Democrats led to the end of the right-wing Republican threat. The Democrats play the "good cop" and the Republicans play the "bad cop." Neither party is able to cure the ills of capitalism, which has repeatedly driven sections of the population toward the only other alternative offered by our two-party political system.

The Way Out

The pandemic was created by global semi-monopoly capitalism, with its intersection of urbanism, industrial agriculture and wild nature; its global production chains and travel; its weakened public health services; and its nation-states. With its unrelenting drive for quantitative growth, profit and accumulation, capitalism had to upset the ecological balance between humans and the rest of nature. Capitalism is the virus. Continuation of capitalism will only lead to more pandemics, climate catastrophes, economic crashes and disastrous wars. What strategy leads to a revolution for a non-capitalist, cooperative, participatory-democratic and ecologically balanced society?

Historically, the main progressive advances in politics have come from direct action outside the electoral system. The great strikes of the thirties gave us unions and won the benefits of the New Deal. African-Americans destroyed racial segregation and gained other benefits through massive civil disobedience and "riots." The war in Vietnam was opposed through huge demonstrations, draft resistance and rebellion in the military. Gay liberation was fought by the Stonewall "riots" and Act Up civil disobedience. Women's liberation developed in the context of all these popular struggles. And in every case, the movements died down or were tamed when they turned to working through the Democratic Party in elections.

Even under conditions of the plague, people have been self-organizing. There have been strikes by Whole Foods, Instacart and Amazon workers to demand better health protection and more time off. There have been labor actions by poultry, auto, sanitation and warehouse workers. Unionized nurses have been forceful in protesting shortages. Bus workers in Detroit bargained for fare-free bus service. Workers at GE demanded repurposing jet engine factories to make ventilators. Car caravans demanded a moratorium on rent. There has also been mutual aid organizing for people to help themselves and each other, given the failures of the government and big business.

How long the coronavirus plague will last, of course I do not know. I expect the economic collapse to last a good deal longer and the climate crisis to worsen whoever gets elected. Whatever happens in this election (and it would say something positive about the U.S. people if they reject Trump), progress depends on more mass action in the streets, the schools, the offices and the workshops. Only this could lead to a revolutionary reorganization of society.

Understanding South Africa's incomplete liberation: An anarchist/syndicalist analysis

BY LUCIEN VAN DER WALT

Input at Makhanda, South Africa, one-day workshop: "An Alternative for a World in Crisis: The Rojava Revolution, Kurdish Freedom Movement and Prospects for South Africa's Incomplete Liberation." The workshop was attended by 60 people, mostly from the Phakamani Siyephambili farmworkers' committee movement, the Unemployed Peoples Movement, the Sakbuluntu Cultural Group/Workers World Media and the East Cape Agricultural Research Project. It was organized by the International Labour Research and Information Group and the Neil Aggett Labour Studies Unit, and part of the ground-breaking national Rojava Speaking Tour by Ercan Ayboga and Rohash Shexo from Kurdistan, run by ILRIG.

The 1994 transition to a democratic parliamentary state was a major advance for South Africans, including the black working class and poor. For the first time, there was a constitution with guaranteed rights, universal suffrage, and a formal commitment to equality. The openly racist practices of the old government were now illegal; instead of an authoritarian state, the country now had free, fair elections. The state welfare system was deracialized, schools and universities were desegregated, as were residential areas and state services, and the homeland or Bantustan system was formally abolished as efforts were made to create a single, unified people. These are not small achievements: 350 years of authoritarian state rule based on white supremacy had ended.

At the same time, the transition failed to fundamentally eradicate inequality or exploitation in South Africa. For most of the black working class and poor, the past (in the form of the apartheid legacy) and the present (in the form of an ongoing cheap black labor system) remain daily reality. This can be seen in terms of the perpetuation of the township system in the towns, with its wretched schools and living conditions, housing shortages, poverty, overcrowding, mass unemployment and crime; of white-dominated capitalist agriculture and massively unequal land ownership in much of the countryside; and of chiefly/royal rule and grim underdevelopment in the old homeland areas. A large social welfare system blunts the edges, but excludes the unemployed and pays pittances; the state services on which most people rely are run-down and inadequate.

The simple reality is that the transition in South Africa retained the major structures that enabled the centralization of major social resources in the hands of a few: a small ruling class still dominates and exploits the majority of our people, the working class and poor. These structures are capitalism and the state.

This was not an accident or a product of bad leaders, of an unholy compromise, or a "sell-out." The nationalist politicians who won control of the national liberation struggle in South Africa never intended to get rid of these structures. They wanted to capture them instead. These politicians played a progressive role in the fight against apartheid, but their political project was fundamentally incapable of creating a society that would provide complete liberation for the mass of the people. It was not inevitable that the nationalists would capture the struggle, but their victory ensured that the mass of the people only got an incomplete liberation – and that, in power, the nationalist politicians would become

part of an oppressive, exploitative ruling class.

Deep Structure of Inequality

It is difficult to see how massive poverty, inequality and other social evils, which primarily affect black working class and poor people, can be removed without a massive expenditure of resources, in the trillions of Rands – and an accompanying reorganization of the economy to move resources into houses, rather than shopping malls, into decent jobs rather than a cheap labor system that entrenches poverty and entails mass unemployment, into reliable and renewable energy and water rather than crumbling infrastructure etc. At the same time, major changes would be needed to end a system based on cheap black labor, unequal development and mass unemployment.

But that is not what is happening. Wealth and power remain profoundly centralized in the hands of a few, and if anything, this has become worse. And this is not simply about race. The average white is far better-off than the average black, and the old white corporate and farming elite retain their wealth. Most black African households live in poverty, and remain a source of cheap labor. However, the black middle class and elite are part of the upper 10 percent of society – although many are vocal nationalists who flatly deny that blacks are divided by class. As far back as 1996, "the average household income in the richest tenth of black households was over two hundred and fifty times higher than the average income in the poorest tenth."¹ A black elite was part of the apartheid state (especially through the homeland system), and the black elite has grown massively post-apartheid. Figures like Cyril Ramaphosa – current president of South Africa, who rose from trade union leader to billionaire leader of the ruling African National Congress – are only the top of a huge iceberg.

Differences in income are only part of the story of post-apartheid inequality. We need to look at where income comes from, and how income inequalities reflect deeper structural inequalities in control over power and wealth. For example, recent work suggests that the top 10 percent of households in South Africa own 87 percent of aggregate wealth, the top 0.1 percent close to one-third and the top 0.01 percent (3,500 individuals) concentrate 15 percent of total household net worth.² It is not a coincidence that the highest-earning 10 percent in South Africa also receive more than 50 percent of all income in the country,² and that nearly half of this income actually goes to just the top 1 percent.⁴

But even this simplifies things too much. For example, the South African state president earns around R4 million a year. A registered nurse from South Africa, working in Saudi Arabia on contract, can earn up to R1 million a year,⁵ and if two nurses on such contracts shared a household, they would get R2 million a year.

Yet the difference between the president and the nurses is vastly bigger than R2 million in income. The state president has power over hundreds of billions of Rand, over a million employees including the army and police, massive state corporations such as the gigantic electricity firm ESKOM and other state assets,⁶ the harbors, around a quarter of all land, and a vast range of other

Wealth and power remain profoundly centralized in the hands of a few; if anything, this has become worse...



resources.⁷ While the president commands vast bureaucratic, military and productive assets, and hundreds of thousands of people, the nurses' personal "wealth" in the form of assets are likely to be those that do not provide power or wealth: a house, a car or two, and financial policies like pensions.

Class Power and Wealth

So, it is important to look at where income comes from. A very high salary is typically tied to two things: first, a very powerful position in society that provides access to, and control of, major social resources; and, second, the ability to set the salary itself, such that people in these top positions do not negotiate with an employer for wages, but are in fact employers who can decide what they will pay themselves.

Let me be clear that this also means that wealth and power are not restricted to private capitalists. Obviously, the owner of a large private firm, such as a mining corporation, controls wealth-generating assets and workers, and earns a high income. But the same is also true of people with senior positions in the state, as these positions also grant control over wealth-generating assets and workers, and earn a high income.

You do not need to be a capitalist to wield state power. Wielding state power can make you at least as powerful as a major capitalist, and state power can lead directly to personal wealth accumulation. Only one out of the eleven South African heads of state (Ramaphosa) since the South African state was created in 1909 was a capitalist when he took office; and Ramaphosa's rise to riches was not due to business skills or family wealth, but was made possible by his political connections and profile. Economic wealth can generate political power, but political power can also generate economic wealth. So it is mistaken to argue – as do many Marxists – that real power is economic power, or that state power is simply a tool for the economically powerful.⁸

Resources and Ruling Classes

The powerful positions in society are always those that involve *significant control over major social resources*, which are 1. means of *production* (resources like equipment and raw materials used to make goods or services); 2. means of *administration* (that govern society); and 3. means of *coercion* (the resources of violence, including armies, police and prisons). These positions enable access to high salaries, as well as other sources of income such as shares in private firms that pay dividends, land that generates rent, and the ability to access other resources such as private contracts with the state. They do not always involve direct personal ownership of these resources (such as share certificates), but entail the control of major resources – including over investment decisions and how resources are used, as well over the work of other people – by a

small elite. It is the private property, if you like, of this *class*, even if it's not always the personal property of *individuals* in this elite.

We can label the group of people in society that control the major resources – the means of administration, coercion and production – the **ruling class**. The ruling class are the people that have control over one or more of these means, and this generally places their members in the top 10 percent of income earners, if not the top 1 percent; the working class has none of these means, and therefore is dependent on, and subject to, the ruling class – no matter how much equality the law proclaims.

You can have a fairly high income without much power, as with our nurses example, and a great deal of power with relatively low incomes. The average mayor in South Africa earns around R1.5 million⁹ – not that much more than our nurse, or even artisans in the municipality with rare skills, like millwrights – but the nurse and the millwright do not run the town or pass laws in parliament like the MP. So the difference lies not just in the *level of income*, but in the *social positions* that generate high incomes and the control over social resources connected to those positions.

Keeping the Elites

The simple reality is that the transition in South Africa retained the major structures that enabled the centralization of major social resources in the hands of a few, and so the persistence of a social order controlled by a small ruling class. It did not challenge the basic system that centralized means of administration, coercion and production in the hands of a small ruling class, through capitalism and the state, and that left most people without control over any of these means and under the ruling class, capitalism and the state. What happened is that, instead, the former leaders of the national liberation movement, by and large, joined and reorganized the ruling class. The working class and poor remain at the bottom.

Many members of the ruling class loudly call for wealth redistribution: Ramaphosa of the ANC is a self-described socialist, for example,¹⁰ many leaders of the South African Communist Party are also ANC leaders in senior government positions, and the Economic Freedom Fighters of Julius Malema – a breakaway from the ANC – describes itself as Marxist-Leninist. But by redistribution they either mean better conditions and more protections for the working class, a bigger share for the state section of the ruling class, or a bigger share for the black section of the ruling class. Thus, the purportedly radical EFF's 2019 election manifesto promised billions to support black capitalist industrialists plus R2 trillion (then around US\$143 billion) to fund black asset managers on the Johannesburg Stock Exchange.¹¹

None of this challenges the basic structures of the class system. The nationalists, centered in the state, are mainly concerned in changing the racial composition of control over means of administration, coercion and production, using Black Economic Empowerment (BEE) policies and legal reforms to fast-track the growth of a black elite, and none envisage a society where the working class owns the means and the ruling class vanishes from the stage. The old white economic elite, centered in the private sector, is keen to limit the impact of BEE and otherwise maintain business as usual but accepts that a black elite is essential. Both sides are interested in ensuring capitalist growth, and have since 1994 generally agreed that this needs a neo-liberal approach.

This nationalist agenda can be called "national-democratic revolution," or "decolonization," or "empowerment," or anything one likes, but it is about empowering an elite. This agenda is, in fact, *the core class project of nationalism* itself: a current in national

liberation struggles, nationalism represents the interests of frustrated local elites, and its solution is to deny class divisions among the oppressed, and to capture state power to achieve its goals. To bring the masses with it, nationalism champions many reforms and fights national oppression – which is why it is *progressive* relative to the national oppressor – but defends the class system and seeks the state – which is why it is *reactionary* once in power. From then on, it moves from seeking to channel the energy of the masses, to now actively blocking the “revolutionary torrent” of the popular classes as they raise demands and needs beyond what the nationalists can tolerate.¹² Rather, the nationalists defend the two main structures of class rule.

Capitalism

The first structure of class rule is capitalism. What this means is that we have a system where most means of production are controlled by a small class, and most people are dependent on working for this class in return for wages. If they did not work, they would not get wages; and if they did not get wages, they would not get income, as they do not control any major means of administration, coercion or production.

Furthermore, capitalism is based on producing for profit and power (things have to be sold, and have to sell for more than the cost of making them); and involves exploitation (wages paid to workers are generally less than the value of what they produce). In fact, it is this “unpaid” work that forms the core of the profits that are gained when the products are sold. And since production is for profit and power, the choice on whether to employ people at all, and for what wages, is not based on human needs.

This basic system operates in both privately owned and state-owned resources – I do not think it useful to reduce capitalism to the private sector; its key features exist in the state sector. For example, despite its recent problems, ESKOM, which is 100% state-owned, was for many years one of the five most profitable electricity companies in the world.¹³

When I argue that the capitalist structure is oppressive, I am not arguing that capitalist firms do not carry out vital functions, such as providing food, books, data, housing and electricity. I am simply arguing that this is done with an eye on profit and power, which distorts what is made and how it is made, and which ensures that many people are neglected. Essentially, capitalist corporations have a monopoly over the production of many vital goods and services, and use this to enrich and empower the small elite that controls the corporations. I am also not arguing that everyone in the capitalist corporation is an oppressor: I am arguing, in fact, that the bosses oppress the majority of people in the corporation itself, the workers.

The State

The second major structure of class rule is the state. The means of production are centralized in two main bodies, one being the private capitalist firm (such as Shoprite, or Anglo-American) and the other being the state including in the state-owned corporations (such as ESKOM or SAA). In fact, the state also controls other means of production, such as roads, railways, land (the government owns almost a quarter of the land surface of South Africa), dams, some mines, hotels, etc.

But a distinguishing feature of the state is that it is also the main site where most of the means of administration and the means of coercion are centralized.

Let us look at municipalities again, that is, at the local state. For example, we know that around 1,500 people work here, in

our local Makana municipality. The majority are people involved in manual jobs, ranging from cleaning roads to fixing pipes and power lines, followed by people in administrative (or desk) jobs, or law enforcement, like the traffic department.

The basic decisions in the municipality are, however, taken by the elected council in conjunction with the unelected permanent management of the municipal structures. In practice, the municipality is run by an executive comprising the (elected) mayor plus five councillors in charge of the key portfolios (like infrastructure, or safety), and the (unelected) municipal manager and central finance officer. This executive works with senior provincial and national government departments to run the town, in consultation with the larger local private capitalists.

The point is simply that the system centralizes means of administration, coercion and production in the hands of a few, and that those few are part of a larger ruling class in the town, including the other municipal councillors and managers, and the local capitalists, as well as heads of other major institutions, like the local High Court, Rhodes University, the army base, the police and the prison.

So, when I argue that the state is oppressive, I am not arguing that states do not carry out vital functions, such as providing electricity, or roads, or schools. I am arguing that states operate a monopoly over many of these functions, using this to enrich and empower the small elite heading the state, which also exploits and dominates the majority of people in the state itself, the workers.

Thus, the Makana municipal council in this town has consistently rejected calls from poorer communities to improve services and living conditions in the townships. At the same time, it denies communities – especially the black African and Coloured townships – the means that would enable them to fix the problem directly. This endless standoff led in to a court case that saw the High Court rule in 2019 that the municipal council must be dissolved for gross human right violations, with new elections held.¹⁴ The council has rejected the decision, using government resources provided by the provincial state to appeal the case.

This is an example of the top-down character of the state, and how it – like the private capitalist firm – is run from above, by small groups who serve their own interests. As with a capitalist corporation, decisions come from the top down, by and for the elite in charge. Many people in Makana, understandably frustrated with the failure of the municipality to maintain roads and water systems or upgrade the townships see the problem as a bloated municipality with too many staff. But the fact is that the average municipal worker is as powerless as the average township resident in how things are run, and bears no responsibility for the mismanagement that comes from the top. Thus, like the private capitalists, the state managers take control over vital economic and social functions, run them in hierarchical, exploitative and self-interested ways – often badly, in fact – and use this to extract resources.

Myth of a “Public” Sector

This brings us to a larger issue, which is the nature of the state. People habitually refer to the state’s property as “public” property, i.e. the property of the people, to the realm of state economic activity as a “public” sector, and assume that the state can be used by the ordinary citizen. If this was true, you could make direct decisions over how the means of production in state hands – the state is the single biggest organization in South Africa, and responsible for nearly a quarter of the entire Gross Domestic Product – but, as

The state, like the private capitalist firm, is run from above, by small groups who serve their own interests.

we can see with the Makana case, this is not possible. The mass of the people have no control over, nor rights to, state property – it is instead controlled by a small elite, part of the ruling class. If you think you, as a member of the public, own those assets, see if you can borrow a car from the municipal garages or take a computer from the municipal offices on the basis that you are part of the public, and that its “public property.” We should drop the term “public sector” and simply say “state sector,” avoiding the myths.

Racism was one of the most degrading and humiliating forms of the system of the exploitation of man by man...

The basic pattern is the same in the state and the private sector: a few people make decisions, decide how to use the means of administration, coercion and production, and receive the bulk of the benefits. These people are the ruling class. The ruling class has a vested interest in the perpetuation of the current order in which it has a direct interest – and without which, it cannot exist. And what this means is that, in South Africa as elsewhere, the majority of people remain exploited (they are paid less than they are producing) and dominated (they are bossed around and do not make basic decisions over their lives). *They are the working class*: the great majority including the poor, unemployed and their families, and the workers of all grades and types without power. They are the oppressed majority, oppressed as members of the working class and due to other forms of oppression, created or reinforced by capitalism and the state, like racism. Racism, argued Mozambican Marxist leader Samora Machel of the *Frente de Libertação de Moçambique* (FRELIMO), was “one of the most degrading and humiliating forms of the system of the exploitation of man by man, the instrument preferred by the reactionary classes to divide, isolate and wipe out the progressive forces.”¹⁵

The interests of the working class are incompatible with the current order, which causes its suffering; the interests of the ruling class are completely dependent on the current order, which makes a ruling class possible. *The nexus of this oppression in South Africa is the black working class*: it is on this mass that oppression is concentrated through the state and capitalism, which perpetuate a cheap black labor system and the apartheid legacy for the masses. And, obviously, the transition from apartheid has been, for this mass, an *incomplete liberation*. Only this class can take us to a better society, but this requires breaking with the nationalists.

The Problem is not Bad Attitudes

Why did the national liberation struggle in South Africa come to this path? It is important to dispel a few mistaken explanations of why postcolonial elites generally – and the post-apartheid nationalist elite, centered on the ANC leadership specifically – actively entrench inequality, oppress the popular classes, and enrich themselves.

One common, but mistaken, understanding is that the problem does not lie in the nationalist program, but with a few leaders. The issue might be a moral one (the leaders are too greedy), or a psychological one (the leaders are too influenced by “foreign” ideas, or are “mentally colonized”), or an attitudinal one (the leaders are not nationalist enough, or are “too intellectual,” or are out of touch with their culture). The solution is then just to have better nationalist leaders: more honest, more sincere, tougher.

But this does not explain the outcomes things very well. Even states that are not very corrupt – for example, Botswana – rule over highly unequal class-divided societies. The replacement of the highly corrupt and widely-loathed Zuma by the (relatively) scandal-free Ramaphosa has not changed the basic system in South Africa. Many postcolonial leaders deeply involved in corruption, among them

Zuma and Malema, are aggressively nationalist. As FRELIMO, in its long-lost radical years noted,¹⁶ many “bourgeois,” “reactionary” regimes of “new exploiters” eagerly embraced nationalist ideas like “Negritude and African authenticity” to justify their actions.¹⁷

Seeing the problem in terms of bad individuals just cannot explain why nationalists everywhere, in every continent and of every color, have delivered the same basic results. *What we see when nationalism is in state power in postcolonial countries is not a betrayal of the nationalist project, it is the nationalist project.* A change in the individual leaders, or even of the nationalist faction in charge, can certainly make a difference to *how* the project runs, but it can’t change the basic project, and the fact that it is deeply embedded in class, capitalism and the state.

The Problem is not Compromises

Another common, but mistaken, understanding of why South Africa ended up where it did, sees the problem as the nationalists making too many compromises in the negotiations that ended apartheid in the early 1990s. Some who take this position blame Joe Slovo of the SACP, who proposed “Sunset Clauses” to assist the transition; others blame Nelson Mandela of the ANC, seen as too willing to appease the whites.

But this explanation also flounders in the face of the facts. The ANC never “sold out” its core program: it was always committed to a democratic, new, essentially capitalist South Africa, which would “open up fresh fields for the development of a prosperous Non-European bourgeois class,” so that “private enterprise will boom and flourish as never before.”¹⁸ And to this, one could add that the Freedom Charter also stated: “All people shall have equal rights to trade where they choose, to manufacture and to enter all trades, crafts and professions.”

The Sunset Clauses proposed by the ANC via Slovo do not explain much. Compromises, in themselves, are not defeats: sometimes they are tactical retreats that enable strategic gains, as was the case here. The Sunset Clauses did not involve any long-term compromise in policy, nor set up a power-sharing system. They only involved guaranteeing existing state officials and employees their jobs for five years, and their pensions thereafter,¹⁹ plus promising a short-term government of national unity. In return for these modest concessions, the ANC was able to neutralize a large, dangerous reactionary bloc of disgruntled homeland dictators and chiefs, white army officers and farmers and lower-level black and white apartheid-era civil servants threatening civil war.²⁰

And, even before the five years were up, the ANC secured an iron grip on the state that it has never let go. Using this, it has been able to rapidly expand the black elite, including through BEE and the take-over of state corporations like ESKOM by ANC loyalists.

The 1994 compromise shaped the precise *form* of the capitalism, and the state, that succeeded apartheid, and the skill, ruthlessness and appeal of the ANC helped ensure that it was the leading party in the new state. A different transition would have involved a different form. The fact that the transition took place in the era of neo-liberalism shaped what the new government could do, but if it had been established in 1964 it would still have been capitalist and still built a black elite – just with *different methods*, based on the state-led capitalism of that lost era.

The basic structure – class-based, capitalist and statist – would have been in place, with the leaders of the ruling party changed by participation in the state, into a part of the ruling class. As part of the ruling class, they shared its interests – and like their older counterparts in the old system, big white business, the chiefs and

the top officials, their interests became irrevocably tied to maintaining the class system, and with it, the oppression of the mass of the people, the working class and poor.

The Problem is not the ANC

A final, but mistaken, understanding of why South Africa ended up where it did is the idea that the ANC alone has failed. The idea is, then, that one of the small rival nationalist parties, like the Azanian People's Organisation (AZAPO) which came from the Black Consciousness movement of Steve Biko, or the Pan-Africanist Congress, an ANC breakaway advocating an ultra-nationalist program, or even the EFF, would do a better job.

There are many problems with this explanation. The basic pattern of the top 1 out of 10 people getting most of the income, and a small minority controlling most of the means of administration, coercion and production exists, in pretty much every modern society worldwide – and certainly in every country where nationalists took power. No nationalist government, anywhere, has ever abolished this system – this includes ruling nationalist parties in Africa influenced by Negritude, Black Consciousness and Pan-Africanism. Even where nationalist movements won power militarily – as in Algeria – the same pattern of inequality remained in place. If people of the stature of Mandela, Slovo and Ramaphosa – all great heroes in their time, who terrified the apartheid regime – could not deliver real freedom for most people after taking state power, why should we expect better of the leaders of parties who failed to win power or sustain widespread influence?

The Limits of the Nationalist Model

The limits of the nationalist model of national liberation need to be addressed. The national liberation struggle in South Africa *could* have gone in many directions, including revolutionary syndicalism. It was, however, captured by the nationalists. The nationalists accepted the basic framework of class, capitalism and the state. They aimed to make it more democratic, more inclusive of black people, and fairer. Their core aim was to capture state power, and use it to provide freedom from above. Although the nationalist parties' membership included, as did their leadership, many people of working-class background, the *essential class project* of these movements was a mixture of the aspirations of the oppressed black middle class of frustrated professionals and small capitalists, and of an aspirant, frustrated, black bourgeoisie. The *class content* of a movement is not defined by a survey of its *class composition*: even the big, openly neo-liberal parties have, everywhere, millions of working-class supporters; they could hardly be elected if they were restricted to members of the ruling class. What is decisive is what *class interests* are served by the party.²¹

Further, they were multi-class parties – as nationalists, they aimed to unite the largest possible range of forces in the nation – they always accommodated local capitalists, as well as the chieftaincy, one of the major landlords. You cannot bring black capitalists into a nationalist movement if your aim is to abolish capitalism – which means abolishing their class status as much as that of white or of overseas capitalists. To make the multi-class popular front at which they aimed possible, they accepted that the new nation would have different classes and, to keep the capitalists in, they had to have capitalism as the class system. That is, they accepted the class system, and with it the antagonistic interests of classes, and they chose to continue a system in which an elite oppressed a mass.

Some, like a section of the ANC, aimed to abolish "white monopoly capital" ("WMC"), but that is not the same thing as

abolishing capitalism. Is black monopoly capitalism kinder, or neo-liberal free market capitalism better than monopoly capitalism? For the frustrated black bourgeoisie, perhaps, but as we have seen at Lonmin at Marikana the difference for the working class will be minimal: Lonmin mines in South Africa is 30% owned by the South African state, includes major shareholdings by ANC leaders like Ramaphosa, and is not traditional South African WMC, yet is infamous for massacring black miners at Marikana, on August 16, 2012.

And, even if the whole elite in South Africa was black, the majority of people in low-wage jobs and poor would still be black, for the simple reason that this is the majority of the population and we have a system – like other countries – that keeps most people poor, powerless and exploited. Unless you have a society that fundamentally redistributes wealth and power, the majority will not have wealth or power. You will have, instead, a society where a small ruling class is in charge and rules society to its own benefit. It is, as Mikhail Bakunin noted, the "iron logic" of wielding state power that makes the nationalist heroes of yesterday into part of the ruling class today, and so into "enemies of the people."²²

The State is Part of the Problem

Even where these nationalists spoke of socialism, as ANC, EFF, PAC, AZAPO and EFF have all done at times, what they meant was an economy run by the state, or in which the state had a very large role. *Where they spoke of socialism, this meant essentially a larger state sector, and that meant, simply, that a small elite would remain in charge, dominating and exploiting workers, while serving its own class interests.* They did not envisage getting rid of wage labor, but instead, having the state as the main employer of wage labor. They did not envisage a system where ordinary people ran the economy democratically, but rather that the state would run the economy from above.

The state is part of the problem. The state is fundamentally incompatible with a democratic system where the broad population is regularly involved in, and engaged in, making decisions. The state, moreover, is dependent – as we have seen with crystal clarity over the last two years in South Africa – on the health of the economy, which in modern days means capitalism – and over the last forty years, neo-liberal capitalism, which is based on privatization, free trade, flexible labor and attracting private investors.

More state ownership does not challenge the class nature of capitalism, or its ills. The apartheid state had a larger state sector than the post-apartheid state, and many apartheid homelands had their own state industries. None of these were in any way socialist. To say state ownership is a measure of socialism, we would be forced to conclude that apartheid was more socialist than post-apartheid, and that the highpoint of the apartheid state's control of the economy – the 1960s under Hendrik Verwoerd – was more socialist than the last years of apartheid under F.W. De Klerk.

In South Africa today, the state is the single largest employer, the largest landowner, and owns some of the largest corporations in Africa: ESKOM is a multi-national corporation, active in over 30 countries. It is 100% state-owned, yet is exploitative, corrupt and oppressive towards the working class. These are expected to make profit, and in doing so, they operate in roughly the same way as private capitalist firms. The state is the twin of the private capitalist corporation, not its enemy and certainly not the force that can abolish classes.

The "iron logic" of wielding state power makes the nationalist heroes of yesterday into part of the ruling class today, and so into enemies of the people...

Conclusion:

At a Distance from the State

It is pointless to try revive the old ANC, AZAPO or PAC traditions. *We are where we are because these nationalists could not bring us anywhere better.*

What is needed, then, is a politics that aims at change, but is *autonomous* of the state and of elections and corporatism; that is sceptical of the state, yet rejects the free market and capitalism; a politics centered on building mass movements of counter-power, and a popular counter-culture, that can resist the current system, and form the *infrastructure* of a new social system based on direct democracy, participation, political pluralism and common ownership.

The issue is not, in the final analysis, a choice between more or less state ownership. It is a choice between common ownership, based on self-management by the majority, and minority ownership by a small ruling class – either through private corporations or through the state.

NOTES: 1. Natrass, N. & J. Seekings, 2001, “Two nations”? Race and economic inequality in South Africa today. *Daedalus* 130 (1), 49. 2. Aroop Chatterjee, Léo Czajka and Amory Gethin, 10 March 2020, “Estimating the Distribution of Household Wealth in South Africa,” WISER seminar, Wits. 3. In 2014: see <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SI.DST.10TH.10> 4. World Inequality Database, pre-tax income: www.indexmundi.com/facts/indicators/SI.DST.10TH.10 5. [www.payscale.com/research/SA/Job=Registered_Nurse_\(RN\)/Salary](http://www.payscale.com/research/SA/Job=Registered_Nurse_(RN)/Salary) 6. In 2018 ESKOM was the 4th largest Africa-based profit-making corporation by turnover: *The Africa Report*, July-September 2019, “Top 500 African Companies,” number 108, pp. 83-97.

7. This is a general problem of measuring class by income. Understanding class as a structure, rather than an income bracket, moves us away from measuring exact incomes to examining the assets that generate income, and therefore shape who goes into what bracket, and then understanding these in the context of the larger social structure. We need to think about shares, investments and property on the one side, as well as positions within large organizations like the state and the private corporation, on the other.

8. For more: Lucien van der Walt, 2018, “Back to the future: Revival, relevance and route of an anarchist/ syndicalist approach to 21st century left, labour and national liberation movements,” in Kirk Helliker and Lucien van der Walt (eds.), *Politics at a distance from the state: Radical and African perspectives*, Routledge, 40-59. 9. <https://businesstech.co.za/news/government/118999/how-much-money-mayors-ministers-and-members-of-parliament-get-paid-in-south-africa/>

10. <https://irr.org.za/media/ramaphosa-says-he2019s-a-socialist-2013-believe-him-rational-standard> 11. Shawn Hattingh, 10 April 2019, “What is authoritarian populism and why should it be combatted?” *Pambazuka News*, www.pambazuka.org/democracy-governance/what-authoritarian-populism-and-why-should-it-be-combatted

12. Ba Jin (Li Pei Kan), [1927] 2005, “Anarchism and the question of practice,” in Robert Graham (ed.), *Anarchism: a documentary history*, volume 1, Black Rose, 326-36.

13. In 2005, ESKOM’s after-tax-profits-to-revenue were almost twice the median of the 23 electricity utilities listed in the Fortune 500 top global companies list: Stephen Greenberg, 2006, *The State, Privatisation and the Public Sector*, Cape Town: Alternative Information and Development Centre (AIDC), 39. 14. www.grocotts.co.za/2020/01/14/upm-celebrates-makana-judgment/ 15. Quoted in Chris Searle, 1975, *Beyond the skin: How Mozambique is defeating racism*, Liberation, London, 5.

16. I will not discuss the trajectory of the Marxist-Leninist parties

like FRELIMO and SACP here. It is complicated and distinctive, including in its interaction with nationalism, and merits another paper. 17. Quoted in Searle, 1979, *Beyond the skin*, 24-25. 18. Nelson Mandela, July 1956, “In Our Lifetime,” *Liberation*. 19. Not at all difficult, as the main pension fund had built up massive reserves from the 1980s. 20. Joe Slovo, 1992, “Negotiations: What Room for Compromise,” *African Communist*, 3rd quarter, 36-40.

21. It may have been possible at certain junctures for the nationalist parties to be captured by the working class, and transformed. That is another discussion. What matters here is that they were not. 22. Mikhail Bakunin, [1873] 1971, “Statism and Anarchy,” in Sam Dolgoff (ed.), *Bakunin on anarchy*, London, George Allen and Unwin, 343.

Mutual Aid & Solidarity Against the Covid-19 Crisis

BY JEFF SHANTZ

It took only a matter of weeks for politicians and political pundits to openly muse about the death calculus that should be undertaken to determine how many should die to “save the economy,” or more precisely to restore profits to owners and investors. Shutdowns and isolation might be good for people and the planet but were not so great for capital accumulation. It turns out capital does not care if people or the planet die, as long as the Dow goes up. Pretenses have been shed, the core of the system is on display.

The COVID-19 crisis has shown the contradictions in a society in which workers produce enormous value (tasks, services, products, care) that they do not control or have access to and which is hoarded by capital. It also shows that those who labor do not even control decision-making over their labors.

It has raised, powerfully, issues of wealth redistribution, reoriented production (making ventilators and medical supplies might be more important than cars and tanks), and the necessity of egalitarian access to essential goods and services (housing, health care, food, etc.).

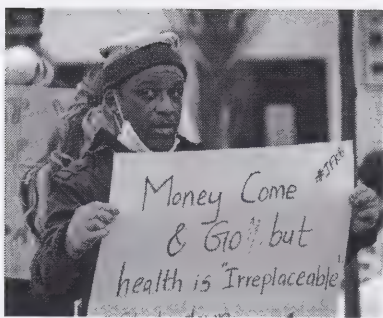
The crisis has also shown that long-needed policy actions, like housing homeless people, income assistance or guaranteed income, universal access to medical care, can actually be implemented surprisingly quickly and directly – at least with greater facility than we have been told. That they have not been is not a matter of lack of resources or funds but because of political preferences and lack of will. Governments had simply decided not to do it previously (even as crises like homelessness expanded).

Perhaps most significantly for thinking about moves to a post-COVID ecological future have been the inspiring mobilizations of mutual aid and solidarity as people have organized to support their neighbors and communities. From groups preparing meals and care packages of essentials (toilet paper, sanitizer, soap, etc.), tents and clothing drops for homeless people, impressive examples of social solidarity have helped to overcome some of the alienation and individualism of habitual life under capitalism and show the connectedness needed to change things more positively.

We have also seen organizing for rent strikes as people collectively challenge the obscenity of landlords demanding rent (even as governments have offered mortgage relief for owners) while people are without work.

The shutdowns resulting from the COVID-19 crisis have shown the importance of work often devalued socially. The crisis

continued on page 39



Anarchy and Covid-19

BY IAIN MCKAY

A standard reproach against anarchism is that it would not be able to withstand crises as well as hierarchies. This is often the underlying assumption of Marxist diatribes against anarchism – although these usually invoke euphemisms to avoid admitting that what is really being suggested is that they and their party should be in power. Hence the assertions on the need for a centralized “workers’ state” to organize defense against the counter-revolution (i.e.,

anyone who disagrees with them), plan the economy, and so on – skillfully avoiding discussing the grim inefficiencies and tyrannies of the Bolshevik regime or the various counter-examples which show the opposite (most obviously, the response of the CNT-FAI to Franco’s coup).

The coronavirus crisis – like any crisis – sees people “rally to the flag” and be more willing to view those in power in a good light. This happened in the UK with the serial lying, incompetent, self-serving, waffling, racist, sexist, homophobic lazy waste of space known as “Boris” but better called Johnson (and not only because that is his surname). It even happened with Trump – although his bump in the polls was both smaller in size and shorter in duration. Still, Trump does serve a purpose – making even Johnson and his response to the crisis seem better by default.

Which raises a question – what would an anarchist society, an anarchy, do in the face of a coronavirus crisis?

This is no idle question – addressing a serious issue and the concerns it generates in the general public (i.e., people we want to become anarchists) should be something anarchists do. We must apply our ideas to real events if we take our ideas seriously and seek to see them applied – rather than an excuse to sound ultra-radical.

Now, there may be a tendency for some anarchists – as with “crime” (i.e., anti-social behavior) – to simply say that a free society would not have any. This, as with crime, is not very convincing and, for example, Kropotkin did not suggest that. He argued, like other anarchist thinkers, that anti-social behavior would, indeed, be vastly reduced in a decent society, but it would never disappear completely. Therefore any which remained would be dealt with via free arbitration between the parties in conflict, as well as community solidarity and self-defense conducted as humanely as an illness would be.

The same can be said for Covid-19. Yes, a free society would be one based on workers’ control, so it is unlikely that it would be lacking in safe and hygienic working conditions. It would not have the same pressures from bosses to cut corners to maximize profits (and in non-mutualist anarchies there would be no market pressures to do likewise). It would not experience the hollowing out of society and its various institutions (not least health care) that neo-liberalism has produced nor would it have people with low-paid, insecure jobs who have to drag themselves into work because they have bills to pay but, by so doing, spread the virus. It would not have obscenities like billionaires having a net worth far in excess of the costs of paying their workers decent sick pay for months.

Likewise, without the profit machine, we would not have the extra worry of an economic collapse due to firms going under because of lack of income as their customers stay indoors or because workers are self-isolating and so not coming into work. Nor would an anarchist society suffer from the irrationalities of the stock market (and the impact of financial crisis on the real economy in spite of nothing changing in terms of workplaces, workers, etc.)

or the short-termism of the market economy. There would be no concerns about workplaces having enough custom to survive – “economic” activity (the provision of goods and services) would decrease in an anarchy affected by an epidemic as people get ill and self-isolate – but this would not have the devastating effects it has under capitalism. Workplaces would not be going bust, so workers would not be made redundant and then be evicted because they could not pay their rent, etc. The same analysis of capitalism’s regular economic crises and the extra uncertainty markets create are applicable in a pandemic.

The crisis has also shown the limitations – undesirability! – of modern capitalism’s extended supply chains, not least for food. Centralized, industrial food production – as described in *Fast Food Nation* by Eric Schlosser, for example – would not exist, for, as Kropotkin stressed in *Fields, Factories and Workshops*, a free people would seek a diversity of work experiences and so integrate industry and farming with the aim of providing locally as much as possible (this, he stressed, did not mean the end of interregional or even international supply chains but rather their reduction to goods which cannot be best produced locally). This means that the vast – and potentially fragile – supply chains would not be rare (i.e., limited to those which need them rather than driven into all areas by profit and market power considerations). Likewise, more resources would be available as many of the wasteful things created today (the arms industry, armies, bureaucracies, law, enforcing property rights, etc.) would not exist – resources would be utilized for real social and individual needs (like decent healthcare).

So the social and economic context would be better. Nor would we have a compliant media interested in bolstering private power and its minions – so information would not be spread based on how to make Trump or Johnson look best. Nor would it be concerned about the authorities using the crisis to their own ends, as there would be no hierarchical authorities (the difference between *being* an authority and *having* authority is very clear now with numpies like Trump and Johnson in office).

All this would be the case, I am sure, but the very nature of life is such that we cannot predict the future, and even the most unlikely events can occur so best plan for the worse. As such, to proclaim that an anarchy would be unaffected by pandemics is like proclaiming that an anarchy would never face earthquakes, hurricanes, or the occasional anti-social arsehole.

So how would an anarchy deal with a crisis like this?

The most obvious thing to note is that a free society would still have scientific experts and their groups and federations, as well as groups providing emergency and health services (and their federations), and as these would be volunteer associations, many more people undoubtedly would have taken part in them compared to our society which is marked by an extreme division of labor. This means that there would be a social and economic infrastructure in place – including federations of communities and productive associations, along with health, scientific and emergency ones – which

will make decisions and plans. So, to take an obvious example, there would be something like the World Health Organization although the equivalent body would be based on a union of health workers' federations. Likewise with emergency services such as Fire Fighter Federations and so on.

These would not have to deal with needless hierarchies and the fragile egos of those in charge, as is now the case. Malatesta put it well in *Anarchy*:

But let us even suppose that the government were not in any case a privileged class, and could survive without creating around itself a new privileged class, and remain the representative, the servant as it were, of the whole of society. And what useful purpose could this possibly serve? How and in what way would this increase the strength, the intelligence, the spirit of solidarity, the concern for the wellbeing of all and of future generations, which at any given time happen to exist in a given society? ...

What can government itself add to the moral and material forces that exist in society? And so the rulers can only make use of the forces that exist in society – except for those great forces which governmental action paralyzes and destroys, and those rebel forces, and all that is wasted through conflicts; inevitably tremendous losses in such an artificial system. If they contribute something of their own they can only do so as men and not as rulers. And of those material and moral forces which remain at the disposal of the government, only a minute part is allowed to play a really useful role for society. The rest is either used up in repressive actions to keep the rebel forces in check or is otherwise diverted from its ends of the general good and used to benefit a few at the expense of the majority of the people... Social action, therefore, is neither the negation nor the complement of individual initiative, but is the resultant of initiatives, thoughts and actions of all individuals who make up society; a resultant which, all other things being equal, is greater or smaller depending on whether individual forces are directed to a common objective or are divided or antagonistic. And if instead, as do the authoritarians, one means government action when one talks of social action, then this is still the resultant of individual forces, but only of those individuals who form the government or who by reason of their position can influence the policy of the government ...

Even if we pursue our hypothesis of the ideal government of the authoritarian socialists, it follows from what we have said that far from resulting in an increase in the productive, organising and protective forces in society, it would greatly reduce them, limiting initiative to a few, and giving them the right to do everything without, of course, being able to provide them with the gift of being all-knowing.

In short, just because the state monopolizes certain useful activities, it does not mean that an anarchist society will not provide them. Indeed, Kropotkin argued in *Modern Science and Anarchy* that humanity will be forced to find new forms of organization for the social functions that the state performs through bureaucracy and that “nothing will be done as long as this is not done.” These would be based – at least initially – on the organizations we forge in our struggles against exploitation and oppression today:

Developed in the course of history to establish and maintain ... the ruling class ... what means can the State provide to abolish this monopoly that the working class could not find in its own strength and groups? ... what advantages could the State provide for abolishing these same privileges? Could its governmental machine, developed for the creation and

upholding of these privileges, now be used to abolish them? Would not the new function require new organs? And these new organs would they not have to be created by the workers themselves, in *their* unions, *their* federations, completely outside the State? ...

independent Communes for the *territorial* groupings, and vast federations of trade unions for groupings *by social functions* – the two interwoven and providing support to each to meet the needs of society ... groupings *by personal affinities* ... infinitely varied, long-lasting or fleeting, emerging according to the needs of the moment for all possible purposes... These three kinds of groupings, covering each other like a network, would thus allow the satisfaction of all social needs: consumption, production and exchange, communications, sanitary arrangements, education, mutual protection against aggression, mutual aid, territorial defence ... Unnecessary for maintaining the economic life of society, [the state] would likewise be [unnecessary] for preventing most anti-social acts.

This network of associations – based on community, economic and scientific interests – would exist without the bureaucrats, politicians and capitalists and would be the basis for a response to such a crisis in a free society. Nor would we have a society in which education is skewed to enrich some and marginalize the many, and so we would have an educated and well-informed population with a better grasp of science (as everyone would combine “Brain Work and Manual Work,” to use Kropotkin’s expression from *Fields, Factories and Workshops*). A free society with a better educated and more informed population would ensure the science is understood and followed. This means that calls for a lock-down from recognized experts in the field would be more easily believed, understood and agreed.

In short, there would be the organizational structure in place to allow for a genuine societal response to the crisis: it would *not* be a case of individuals being “left alone” to deal with it themselves in isolation. As such, those on the right who have been vocal in urging state authorities to revoke stay-at-home policies are not presenting a libertarian response to the crisis – quite the reverse, for they are based on completely ignoring scientific expertise and the reality of the class nature of modern society.

It is all fine-and-well to for some to proclaim that it is up to “individuals” to determine how they respond to the crisis in terms of self-isolation, but this in the abstract and ignores the *class nature of modern society* in favor of an abstract individualism which obscures the limitations this kind of system places on individual choice. Simply put, people need to eat and in a capitalist society the bulk of the population sell their labor to bosses to be able to do so. This means that their “choice” amounts to turning up at work when ordered to by their boss or starving. This means workers not self-isolating because they have to work to pay the bills. So, in practice, it is not *their* choice on how much they self-isolate but that of their bosses and landlords. To ignore this obvious point is to join the Trumpian death cult, which is willing to sacrifice untold thousands to capital.

This means that, in a class society, such calls – assuming they are issued in good faith – are limited because they ignore private power (by design). However, the issue is broader: for rather than call upon the initiative and action of all, such “individualism” is reduced to the initiative and action of the few who own (or control on behalf of that few). Rather than leave people alone to solve their problems, those who have few or no resources have a corresponding

ability to act. So if the state – as Malatesta argued – reduces social initiative to the few at the top of the public hierarchies (as mediated by the inevitable bureaucracies), so property reduces initiative to the few at the top of the private hierarchies (as mediated by the inevitable bureaucracies, although they are not called that in polite circles).

An anarchy would be able to draw upon all the initiative and forces within a society that are channelled and often lost in hierarchical structures like the state and private companies. Likewise, we would not have capitalists seeking to profit from the situation. This means we would have the initiative of free people without its skewing towards bolstering narrow private interests. (Needless to say, seeking to stop an epidemic would be in everyone's wider "private" interests.) For example, transport workers would undoubtedly decide to limit activities to the minimum needed, workers in distribution centers would insist those entering them have appropriate protective clothing, etc.

An anarchy would have a social organization which would not have the shackles of authority placed upon it – whether that authority be economic (capital) or political (state). While the state is one form of social organization, it is not the only kind. As can be seen from the response to this crisis, its hierarchical and centralized nature can obstruct the information and initiative needed to respond quickly to issues. Indeed, the notion that state-socialism with its centralized planning could handle a crisis like this is an extremely optimistic claim as, being unexpected (unplanned!), the planning machinery (bureaucracy) would have to rip up all its previous plans, continually restart the process and all the while workers would await appropriate orders (assuming, of course, its personnel are not affected by the virus along with those commanded to implement the changes). Only a federal system rooted in autonomy and initiative from below would be able to face the complexities of this challenge – or, indeed, a complex modern society in normal times.

This crisis provides some evidence in favor of anarchist solutions. The more decentralized and federal states have generally responded faster and better than the centralized ones. In the UK, for example, the so-called leadership dithered, sent out contradictory messages and only acted after individuals, groups and companies as well as local and devolved governments took the initiative. Then there is the contrast between countries:

Ministers don't like to be reminded of it, but Germany has done far, far better than the UK, and England in particular. Its decentralised model for testing was streets ahead of Britain's top-down centralised approach. (Larry Elliot "How England found itself at the wrong end of the Covid-19 league table," *The Guardian* 18 May 2020)

Those governments which genuinely follow the science (rather than invoking it as an excuse), those which consulted widely with local councils, trade unions and other bodies, those which had not eviscerated social society by unneeded austerity or weakened intermediate organizations (like local councils or unions) to impose

neo-liberalism, all did better. See, for example, Denmark's low death rate and its process of opening schools based on meaningful discussion with unions and local councils to England's (and it is England's rather than Britain's) central diktat based on picking an arbitrary date, the demonization of teachers' unions and their concerns over safety and dubious invoking of "the science" to justify a decision clearly driven by other factors.

The myth is that centralization is more efficient. Yes, orders may be issued and people act but often belatedly, inefficiently, ineffectively and at great human and ecological cost. Now, the ruling elite cares little for that, but socialists cannot be so sanguine. Arbitrary decisions from above can undermine constructive work based on knowledge of local conditions as well as hindering commencing local activities as people subject to hierarchy await orders from above.

That this is no exaggeration can be seen from the example of Bolshevik Russia, which Leninists to this day point to as proof of the need for centralization. The reality was radically different.

Emma Goldman recounted from experience in *My Disillusionment in Russia*:

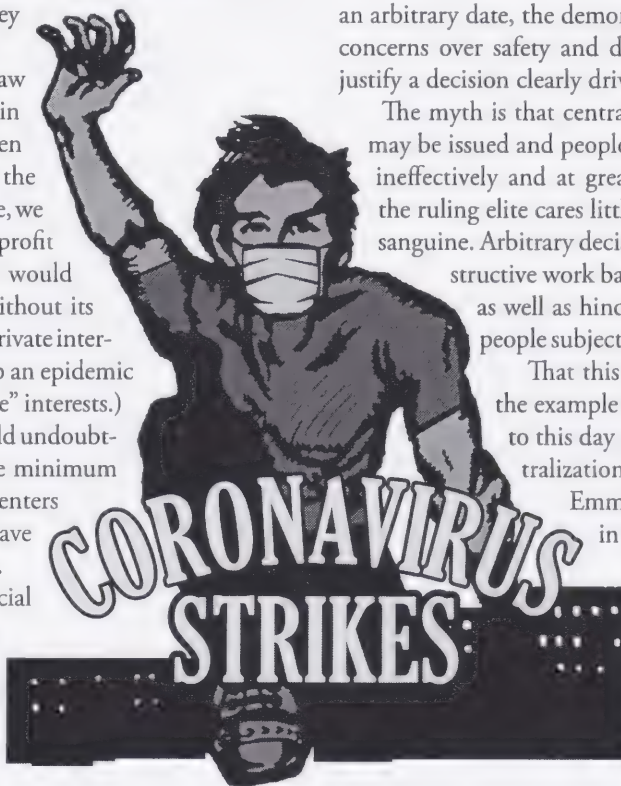
how paralysing was the effect of the bureaucratic red tape which delayed and often frustrated the most earnest and energetic efforts ... Materials were very scarce and it was most difficult to procure them owing to the unbelievably centralised Bolshevik methods. Thus to

get a pound of nails one had to file applications in about ten or fifteen bureaus; to secure some bed linen or ordinary dishes one wasted days.

Thus "the newly fledged officialdom was as hard to cope with as the old bureaucracy" while the "bureaucratic officials seemed to take particular delight in countermanding each other's orders." In short, "the terrorism practiced by the Bolsheviks against every revolutionary criticism ... the new Communist bureaucracy and inefficiency, and the hopelessness of the whole situation ... was a crushing indictment against the Bolsheviks, their theories and methods." The economic crisis worsened and while Leninists to-day repeat the Bolshevik position of blaming this exclusively on the civil war, the centralized, bureaucratic, top-down economic structure played a key role:

In Kharkoff I saw the demonstration of the inefficiency of the centralised bureaucratic machine. In a large factory warehouse there lay huge stacks of agricultural machinery. Moscow had ordered them made "within two weeks, in pain of punishment for sabotage." They were made, and six months already had passed without the 'central authorities' making any effort to distribute the machines to the peasantry. ... It was one of the countless examples of the manner in which the Moscow system 'worked,' or, rather, did not work. ("The Crushing of the Russian Revolution," in Emma Goldman and Alexander Berkman, *To Remain Silent is Impossible: Emma Goldman and Alexander Berkman in Russia*)

Goldman rightly noted that "[o]nly free initiative and popular participation in the affairs of the revolution can prevent [such] terrible blunders" based on "the workers' economic organisations [being] free to exercise their initiative for the common good" rather than "awaiting orders from Moscow for their distribution." (*My Disillusionment in Russia*) This is the sort of activity which



centralization precludes in favor of empowering a few at the center:

The economic changes that will result from the social revolution will be so immense and so profound, they will so alter all the relations based on property and exchange, that it will be impossible for one or even a number of individuals to elaborate the social forms to which a further society must give birth. This elaboration of new social forms can only be the collective work of the masses. To satisfy the immense variety of conditions and needs that will emerge on the day

Centralized hierarchies can act quickly at times. For example, when the UK became the European nation with the highest death-rate the government did take swift action: it stopped showing the international death rate comparison in its daily press conference...

when property is swept away, we shall need the flexibility of the collective spirit of the community. Any kind of external authority will be merely an obstacle, a hindrance to the organic work that has to be accomplished; it will be no better than a source of discord and of hatreds. (Kropotkin, "Revolutionary Government," *Words of a Rebel*)

This is confirmed to a large degree by the coronavirus crisis. In the UK the media reported how companies and individuals volunteering their services in the crisis – for example, clothing companies seeking to supply PPE – met with bureaucratic inertia, their messages ignored or politely answered and nothing else. The sensible ones contacted their

local hospitals directly and arranged supplies. In contrast, we have seen best practice done locally and then spreading sideways and then, sometimes, upwards. If people had not shown initiative, but had rather waited for orders from above, we would be in an even worse position (as the Bolsheviks showed, command economies based on fear do not work very well). Nor should we forget that centrally mandated orders are dependent on local forces being able and willing to implement them.

Still, to be fair, centralized hierarchies can act quickly at times. For example, when the UK became the European nation with the highest death-rate the government did take swift action: it stopped showing the international death rate comparison in its daily press conference (apparently after seven weeks it was, for some unexplained reason, no longer considered accurate). Likewise with issuing an official reply to the devastating account in the *Sunday Times* on the "38 days when Britain sleepwalked into disaster."

In short, we are seeing the limitations of centralization that anarchists have long pointed out.

It also shows the problems with privatization. The UK government has long sought to impose "market forces" onto the NHS and has accelerated outsourcing of work to private companies since squeezing into office in 2010. The impact of austerity policies is obvious, as is the "reforms" of 2012 Health and Social Care Act. After promising no "top-down restructures" during the 2010 election campaign, the Tories did precisely that. This provoked much protest, including nearly 400 public health experts in October 2011 signing an open letter asking members of the House of Lords to reject these reforms, warning they would "undermine the ability of the health system to respond effectively to communicable disease outbreaks and other public health emergencies" (strikes outside certain government-defined issues related to wages and pensions are illegal thanks to legislation passed by governments run by "anti-government ideologues"). So it has come to pass and the opaque procedures produced by outsourcing adding to the bureaucratic mess: designed to allow corporations to feast on public funds, it has proved to be fatal for so many health workers due to the delays

and confusion it produced. In addition, instead of maintaining the needed stockpiles of supplies required to respond to crises, companies in the supply chains maximized profits by minimizing stocks by use of Just-In-Time production systems which have proven to be unfit for purpose now. So private bureaucracies are just as bad as so-called public ones.

Yet this awareness of the bureaucratic and unresponsive nature of centralized structures should not mean we can ignore or, worse, excuse the individuals perched at their top. In a pyramidal structure independence of thought and action is discouraged, so the impact of leaders is increased. Having a Trump or a Johnson at the top, surrounded by nodding dogs who are in their positions solely due to their willingness to brown-nose and obey, means they will not act unless their master indicates a course of action and they also have to spend valuable time and resources spinning the actions and inactions of the dear leader (or spouting increasingly risible nonsense defending their favorites when they break their own clear lockdown guidelines, as with Johnson's political advisor Dominic Cummings). And their lying, sloth, incompetence, their inappropriate and delayed decisions have cost lives, not least because many below them would not act until appropriate orders came from above.

It is easy to see that Trump and Johnson, to name the two most obvious examples, made things worse, much worse. And, yes, a group or federation in an anarchy *could* elect such an incompetent into a post of responsibility or as a delegate, but unlike the current regime these people would have very little actual power and those who work with them would have been raised from birth to question and, if need be, ignore them, judge for themselves when best to act and, crucially, be in a position to subject them to swift recall and *replace them with someone else*.

It is quite staggering how the last few years have shown that "good government" has always been underlined by those in power not being complete arseholes. Theresa May clinging on after 2017, Johnson and his lying and prorogation of parliament, the increase in the powers of the executive (usually nodded through by a compliant Parliament), the constant abuses of position by Trump, the failure of his impeachment... all show that our liberties are less secure than many think – permissions, at best, not freedom.

Similarly, with the right trying to "reopen" the country in order to "save the economy." In short, save the rich's economy... by killing poor people. The obvious point is to ask how can the economy do well with many in the workforce sick or dead? With the Health Service overwhelmed? Yes, many people are in difficult circumstances, but there are many forms of direct action (such as rent strikes) and alternative policies which could be demanded. Unfortunately, the ones being raised in the media and picked up by politicians are all driven by the need to keep the working class in its subordinate role as wage workers. And it is unsurprising to see those who dismissed mass unemployment as "a price worth paying" during the 1980s under Thatcher or dismiss poverty wages as irrelevant now show deep concern over their social and personal impact in order to get people back to the daily grind in order to make profits for capital and, hopefully, avoid coronavirus at the same time. Which shows how fundamentally anti-human capitalism is.

Which raises an obvious question: why is there an economic crisis at all? Why do we need people to go back to work? After all, the right keep informing us that the "wealth creators" are the elite few, the wealthy, the capitalists, the entrepreneurs, the landlords. They all remain. Their property and its "contribution" to production

remain. And yet the economy is tanking... why? Could it be because labor is the real wealth creator, that only it makes a contribution, that the so-called "wealth creators" are monopolizers of a surplus produced by labor alone? In other words, could it be that the so-called "wealth-creators" are no such thing? That while we could manage fine without bosses, landlords, shareholders and the rest, that they could not manage without us workers? The coronavirus shows that this is the case – that capitalism is rooted in exploitation.

So while there are still landlords, stockholders, capitalists, etc., for some strange reason the economies of the world are plunging as labor is in lock-down. Their "contributions" to production amounts to zero when no workers actually work. With the lockdown, only essential workers are allowed out and, strangely enough, these are not CEOs, stock market WizKids and other elements of the 1%, but mostly low-paying jobs which require physical labor – warehouse workers, shelf-stackers, delivery drivers, rubbish collectors, hospital workers of all kinds, care home workers, lorry drivers. While doctors and nurses are highlighted in the media, there are far more heroes out there – and most are near or on the minimum wage.

Key workers are *not* highly paid bankers, CEOs, politicians and the like. They could all self-isolate permanently and we would somehow manage...

Which raises the abolition of work: it would appear that a great many jobs are not really needed after all – they are often driven by the needs of profit-grinding and, while a source of needed income under capitalism, do not actually make sense or are needed to satisfy human needs. David Graeber has discussed this in *On the Phenomenon of Bullshit Jobs: A Work Rant* which he later expanded upon in a book on the same subject. This, in turn, suggests that a sensible social system could eliminate many jobs and cut the working week for what remains. As Alexander Berkman noted in *What is Anarchism?*:

Furthermore it must be considered that the task of increased production would be enormously facilitated by the addition to the ranks of labour of vast numbers whom the altered economic conditions will liberate for work.

Recent statistics show that in 1920 there were in the United States over 41 million persons of both sexes engaged in gainful occupations out of a total population of over 105 millions. Out of those 41 millions only 26 millions were actually employed in the industries, including transportation and agriculture, the balance of 15 millions consisting mostly of persons engaged in trade, of commercial travelers, advertisers, and various other middlemen of the present system. In other words, 15 million persons would be released for useful work by a revolution in the United States. A similar situation, proportionate to population, would develop in other countries.

The greater production necessitated by the social revolution would therefore have an additional army of many million persons at its disposal. The systematic incorporation of those millions into industry and agriculture, aided by modern scientific methods of organization and production, will go a long way toward helping to solve the problems of supply. Capitalist production is for profit; more labour is used today to sell things than to produce them. The social revolution reorganizes the industries on the basis of the *needs* of the populace. Essential needs come first, naturally. Food, clothing, shelter – these are the primal requirements of man. The first step in this direction is the ascertaining of the available supply of provisions and other commodities. The labour associations in every city and community take

this work in hand for the purpose of equitable distribution. Workers' committees in every street and district assume charge, cooperating with similar committees in the city and state, and federating their efforts throughout the country by means of general councils of producers and consumers.

Liberate for work? Or, more correctly, liberate from work? After all, one of the reasons for the change in work priorities is to reduce the working week from over eight hours a day to under four, perhaps even more.

Many who denounce workers' control by suggesting that most workers hate their jobs and that demand would not inspire a revolution miss the obvious: workers' control, like expropriation, is the *start* of the process and not the end. Some workplaces will be closed (as the work they do is no longer needed) or turned to more useful tasks (as when the CNT converted workplaces to produce weapons in July 1936), yet the first stages will be expropriation and workers' self-management with the view to transforming work (the workplace, working conditions, the technologies used, etc.) as well as the structure of industry we inherit from capitalism. We need to start where we *are* and we need to recognize change will take time – with some changes taking longer than others.

However, the current crisis has exposed that *essential* work actually only involves part of the working population. Much of the non-essential work relates to the requirements generated by capitalism, the state machine, etc., and would be ended in a sane society. Many of the non-essential "jobs" which provide a service people like (even if not essential to providing the basic necessities we need) could be run by user and interest groups: a gym, for example, could be run by its members in their leisure hours after their few hours in necessary productive activity.

Of course, all the pious comments in articles published the likes of *Guardian* on how "we" can use the crisis to rethink our priorities, to end the neo-liberalism which has hollowed out our social infrastructure and weakened our ability to respond to this crisis and create a better world, will not come to anything. Capital has never responded to nice words, logic, evidence or some such. It only changes when it feels that the alternative is worse. Due to lock-down, a *social* movement which can place pressure from below onto it and its minion, the state, is much harder to create, but until that is done we can expect the crisis to be exploited to bolster private power and wealth, as well as strengthen the state machine. Hard to create, yes, but still necessary, for we cannot go back to "business as usual."

This is not the place to list demands. The crisis is developing far too fast and people on the ground will see needs and opportunities better than anyone else can (and definitely more than anyone at the top of a distant hierarchy with no links to or interest in the masses they claim to represent). Likewise, this discussion of crisis management in an anarchist society may seem a bit vague, yet this is as it should be, for who are we to lay down today how a free society would operate in the future? All anarchists can do now is sketch the outlines and apply our principles in the organizations and struggles we take part in. We are all shaped by the hierarchies we are born into and it is only by fighting against them that we are able to free ourselves from them both physically and mentally. Only the struggle for freedom will make people able to live freely.

Faced with a crisis like this, we can be sure that a free people and their associations and federations will manage far better than waiting for a few politicians or bosses to act for them. Covid-19 shows how waiting for orders from above can get you killed.

In the Face of the Covid-19 Crisis

The International Confederation of Labor (ICL-CIT) Mobilizes

Greece: Protests and self-management despite government ban and sabotage

Greece, like Italy, has suffered unprecedented privatization and cuts to the public sector in recent years. The situation is aggravated by the EU-Turkey agreement, which left thousands of refugees without escape. The country is highly polarized; a strong but fragmented anarchist movement is faced by powerful Stalinist and violent right-wing movements. Unfortunately, attacks on humanitarian workers such as on Lesbos and political assassinations are not merely anecdotal. The Greek section ESE CIT has been trying to support workers' struggles in hospitals and building a bridge between the struggles of the health sector and decentralized housing for refugees.

In the Ioannina regional district, the trade union federation decided in mid-March to protest against refugee camps. In a statement, ESE points out how dangerous it is to ban political expression now, in the face of the impending end of the health system, which has been dismantled by austerity measures, and the risk of thousands of deaths in refugee camps. Due to security measures, ESE resorted to the "street" protest in Rethymno, Crete. The slogans included: "All lives are worth the same, whether we are homeless, incarcerated, abused, refugees, unemployed or precarious workers." In addition, ESE established two national commissions to monitor current changes in labor legislation and international class struggles. Vio.Me, a self-managed factory producing soap, was closed with the help of Greek police. German unions have filed complaints at consulates and embassies. Today, workers continue their work with emergency electric generators.

Poland: Conflict with VW and Amazon and 10-point anti-government program

In Poland, IP CIT quickly created a website (also in Russian and Ukrainian) with legal information for workers about the coronavirus crisis and an informative video and published six legal guides on specific issues. IP is monitoring the situation, especially at VW and Amazon sites (where the union has a stronger presence).

An IP statement criticized in detail the government's management of the COVID-19 crisis. Subsidies for self-employed and temporary workers are completely insufficient (in Poland there is only one type of very low unemployment benefit). The union also complains about the lack of access to health insurance and that a lack of sick pay requires at least 2.5 million workers to go to their jobs sick. It also criticizes the reduction of workers' rights, the redistribution of corporate tax money and the lack of measures to support the unemployed, pensioners and tenants. As an alternative to the so-called "crisis shield," they demanded: Increased unemployment benefits and the abolition of restrictive regulations under which less than 20% of the unemployed have access to them; Universal access to health care; Abolition of precarious forms of employment, such as temporary or false self-employment work; Free access to basic services (electricity, gas, running water, heating) to all.

At Volkswagen and Danfoss, IP attempted to close plants with full pay to protect their fellow workers. At the Volkswagen plant in Poznan with approximately 11,000 employees, these demands were quickly met. In the case of heating and cooling technology manufacturer Danfoss, working conditions changed slightly due

to pressure. There were minor achievements at logistics companies Amazon and Avon. Here, too, IP exerted pressure, mainly through recordings using hidden cameras showing how closely together the workers have to work. The revelations, which fundamentally contradicted the public statements of the companies, were accompanied by large-scale social media campaigns. Companies have reacted mainly with bonus payments. However, IP continues to fight for the cessation of all work activity. In universities, IP has been particularly active with the aim of ensuring the security of service employees, including reductions in opening hours.

U.S. Wildcat Strikes

The IWW is preparing for rapid growth, and has organized webinars and other activities to inform workers of their legal rights, and to press back against new anti-labor regulations.

In Portland, after mass layoffs were announced, employees of a doughnut chain formed an IWW union section to defend themselves. Also, in Portland, the IWW helped university workers get compensation for days lost due to campus closures.

In Chicago, it only took an IWW request for the Dil Pickel Coop (grocery store) to concede a \$2.00/hr hazard-pay bonus for its workers. IWW members of the CapTel Workers Union in Wisconsin achieved a supplement in salaries for workers of a call center where they suffered mass medical casualties. Although call centers are considered essential in the context of a pandemic, they receive lower wages than other workers.

Oakland's Incarcerated Workers Organizing Committee has conducted telephone actions against prison phone numbers where guards tested positive for COVID-19. The campaign: #LetThemGo.

IWW Oklahoma is asking people to call local restaurants every morning and ask bosses if they offer paid sick leave for staff as their visits would depend on it.

The IWW also raised resistance funds for workers in several cities and pressed for hazard pay for workers in food pantries and other essential services. Local groups in Fairbanks, Phoenix, Connecticut, Burlington, Providence and North Texas are exploring on the possibilities of a rent strike.

In Detroit and Chicago, Wobbly kitchens distributed food among the working class in the parks. IWW Southern Maine supports homeless people who have been assaulted by police. IWW Albuquerque and New York actively participate in various neighborhood support networks.

Italy: Strikes and protective equipment for health workers

In Italy, USI CIT called several strikes against companies that continued operating even though their activity was considered non-essential, including a strike at the Ferrari car factory. Two days after the short strike, the company decided to close its production plants. USI CIT is currently struggling, especially with hospital health workers, demanding more disinfectants and protective clothing and also addressing the reasons for the serious state of the health care system. USI CIT condemned requiring healthcare workers to continue working without adequate protective equipment. USI CIT also participates in food distribution campaigns in autonomous neighborhoods.

Spain: Arrests, rent strike, culture strike

The CNT issued 15 demands to protect workers' safety, supplemented by guidelines for different industrial sectors. CNT unions filed many complaints and complaints with occupational health authorities and trade inspections for a lack of protective measures—in many cases in hospitals and nursing homes. The CNT gave the same advice over and over again: if you still have to work, demand disinfectant and soap. If your industry isn't vital, fight to stay home.

The CNT-CIT addressed not only labor rights, but also the defense of basic rights and the right of assembly. There were more than 2,800 arrests and 330,000 fines in Spain by the end of April.

The Performing Arts section of CNT Madrid demanded a basic subsidy, retroactive to March. CNT fellow workers in Valladolid working in an institution for people with disabilities denounced the total lack of protection measures for the 140 residents and staff, posting pictures of themselves in makeshift protective clothing with garbage bags. In Rivamadrid, the CNT working group together with other unions were able to push for the creation of a catalogue of measures to protect employees. The falsely labeled "independent contractors" of a meat factory, some of whom lived in camps before the epidemic and have been on strike with CNT Valencia for 40 days, were particularly affected.

Support for resistance funds for the strike will be vital in the coming weeks. The sections of social workers of several CNT unions in Valls Oriental, Terrassa, L'Hospitalet and Sabadell, among others, have denounced the lack of measures in the Residential Centers for Educational Action (CRAE) for the young people. Social education workers at CNT developed a guide to action and an intense media campaign against the responsible ministry, which included photographic protests and the #EmergenciaCRAE hashtag.

In some places, the employer has already used the current crisis to get rid of unionists: in Construcciones Maygar S.L. in Pedrera, Andalusia, for example, there was a strike in November. Now, everyone who led the CNT strike has been fired citing economic problems caused by the coronavirus crisis. CNT is defending itself from such attacks in many places.

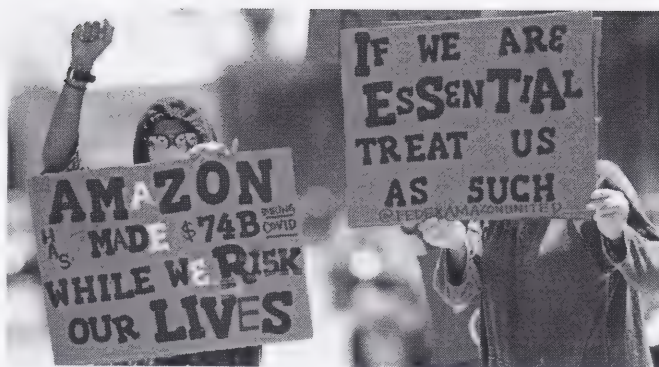
The music sector section of CNT Madrid joined other musicians' unions to announced a digital culture strike April 10 and 11, proposing "to mobilize the entire sector in such a way that all online cultural channels are temporarily closed, without streaming content, on networks or websites, as that culture sinks into a total digital blackout."

CNT unions throughout Spain sewed masks, participated in neighborhood support networks, and donated food. The CNT's Institute of Economics and Self-Management published a series of analyses. The CNT Bilbao Libertarian Library has made available to all many films, audiobooks, podcasts and e-books to make the time more enjoyable during the crisis.

Germany: Online assemblies, neighborhood solidarity

One of the first steps for FAU's local unions was to provide an accurate description of labor law in times of pandemic. FAU Jena and FAU Berlin were very quick with two basic guides, which were followed by more detailed guides by FAU Magdeburg and translations into Arabic by FAU Marburg-Gie-en-Wetzlar.

Many of the unions are very active in their respective towns, participating in neighborhood support networks and in the collection points of necessities (where food and hygiene items are available for those in need). Some unions have addressed the current situation with intensive media work. Internal meetings and



consulting services were transferred to an online service using FAU's own tools in record time due to the efforts of the FAU IT collective.

FAU Bonn started support groups on Telegram for different sectors. FAU Dresden has raised funds for different employment groups and supports the demands of the cultural and educational sector. The FAU in Berlin is fighting to improve the COVID-19 situation at local universities. Several unions report a significant increase in the number of consultations and cases, the first conflicts have already been managed, usually about layoffs and temporary work. FAU has also offered an analysis of the coronavirus crisis, for example FAU Jena with its communiqué "Crisis of the Crown: What Can We Do, Who Pays for It?" and FAU Magdeburg with its text "The Virus and the Crisis of Capitalism."

Organización Obrera #83 (Organ of the Regional Workers Federation of Argentina (FORA-CIT), May-June 2020

India: Garment Workers Sit-In

Women workers at Euro Clothing Company ECC-2, supplier to global brands like H&M, staged an overnight sit-in at the factory June 9, protesting against the illegal lay-off of 1,200 workers. Under Indian labor law, layoffs are permitted only when there is no production and workers are to be paid 50 percent of salaries.

Union-busting at the factory began a few weeks earlier. With the easing of the lockdown, industries were allowed to resume operations on May 5 and workers reported for duty, despite difficulties as public transport had not restarted. Only 30 percent of the workers were provided work, and they were paid half wages for the period they worked. No wages were paid during the lockdown.

The night of May 30, management started removing machines without informing workers or the union, only stopping when workers gathered at the gate, temporarily blocking the removal.

Strikes in Mexicali

Although Baja California is less densely populated than other Mexican states, it's third in the number of Covid-19 cases. 164 have died in Tijuana alone, and most who die are working-age.

Alarm grew when two workers died in early April at the Plantronics maquiladora, where 3,300 workers make phone headsets. Schneider Electric closed when one worker died and 11 more got sick. Skyworks, a manufacturer of communications equipment parts with 5,500 workers, admitted that some had been infected.

Workers struck April 9 at three U.S.-owned factories: Eaton, Spectrum and LG in Mexicali, Baja's state capital, saying the companies were forcing people to come to work under threat of being fired, refusing to pay government-mandated wages and failing to provide masks to workers. The strike quickly spread to other factories, and many activists were fired or "laid off."

An April 14 general strike was called by Mexicali maquiladora workers, supported by the state chapter of the New Labor Center, a federation organized by the Mexican Electrical Workers Union.

Anarchism, Marxism and the lessons of the Paris Commune

BY IAIN MCKAY, PART I OF III

On March 17th the Communist Government completed its 'victory' over the Kronstadt proletariat and on the 18th of March it commemorated the martyrs of the Paris Commune. It was apparent to all who were mute witnesses to the outrage committed by the Bolsheviks that the crime against Kronstadt was far more enormous than the slaughter of the Communards in 1871, for it was done in the name of the Social Revolution, in the name of the Socialist Republic.

— Emma Goldman¹

There are a few sure things about reading history books. First, and most obvious, you generally know how it ends (badly, in the case of the Paris Commune). What is important is what you learn from the events discussed. Second, when it is a Marxist account you are guaranteed that it will (at best) ignore or (at worst) distort the anarchist involvement in and analysis of events. In this, Leninist Donny Gluckstein's account of the Paris Commune² does not disappoint: he both ignores key aspects of the anarchist critique and distorts what parts he does cover.

The Paris Commune is a significant influence for all revolutionary socialists, anarchists as well as Marxists. It should be well known in libertarian circles so there is no need to discuss its history at any great length. Not only were there "among the Communards Anarchists and Syndicalists of a number of different brands"³ but Michael Bakunin and Peter Kropotkin saw the Commune as a striking confirmation (in both positive and negative senses) of anarchist ideas. Karl Marx produced his classic *Civil War in France* immediately after its fall and added what he considered its key lesson — "the working class cannot simply lay hold of the ready-made state machinery, and wield it for its own purposes"⁴ — to the next preface of the *Communist Manifesto*. Lenin placed it at the heart of his *State and Revolution* and proclaimed that while "anarchists had tried to claim" it as "a corroboration of their doctrine" in fact they "completely misunderstood its lessons and Marx's analysis of these lessons."⁵ More recently, Leninist Paul Blackledge utilized this work to suggest the "problem for Bakunin was that Marx was palpably correct" as "the Commune was a novel form of government and indeed a novel form of state" and so Kropotkin produced "an immanent critique of Bakunin's analysis of the Commune."⁶

We will use Gluckstein's book as means of exploring the lessons from the Commune, to show how anarchist ideas are distorted and how the standard Marxist interpretation he summarizes is flawed. It will reaffirm the anarchist influences on the Commune, the place of the Commune in anarchism, and the anarchist critique of it. It will also show how implausible Leninist attempts to appropriate it for their tradition are, for while Gluckstein praises the Commune for introducing "workers' control of production" and "democracy from below" (53) he fails to mention the awkward fact that the Bolsheviks abolished both.

Proudhon, Marx and exploitation

While Marx in *The Civil War in France* failed to mention any intellectual influences on the Commune, presenting it as something which appeared to spring from nowhere, Gluckstein rightly notes that "for all its daring and forward-looking ideas" it was "not

written on a blank sheet." (85) He follows most historians of the Commune into splitting the Commune's political influences into three: Jacobin, Blanquist and Proudhonist. The first were radical republicans, inspired by the Jacobins of the Great French Revolution and primarily sought political change, with the social question to be addressed later. The Blanquists followed their eponymous hero, Louis Auguste Blanqui, in favoring a party of professional revolutionaries who would seize power in a coup and implement socialism from the top down. The "Proudhonists" were inspired by the federal socialism of Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, the first person to call themselves an anarchist, and were a mixed bag who Gluckstein rightly splits into right and left wings.

That the Commune was heavily influenced by Proudhon's ideas should go without saying and the best that can be said of Gluckstein's account is that he at least acknowledges this — stating that while Marx "played a significant role" in the First International that did "not mean, however, that the French section was full of Marxists. Here the Proudhonists were the most influential current." (82) However, his discussion of Proudhon's ideas is a travesty. To be charitable, it simply repeats the standard Marxist analysis of the Frenchman's ideas so his account is not breaking new ground in distortion. Given how regularly this nonsense is repeated, it is worth contrasting Gluckstein's account to what the "father of anarchism" actually argued.

The usual Leninist equation of a market economy with capitalism is repeated, with Gluckstein stating Proudhon's "criticisms of the failings of capitalist society were sharp" but he "did not reject the market system as such." (72) Confusing capitalism with the market allows Proudhon to be presented as an advocate of wage labor and it is asserted that he claimed market exchange under capitalism was based on freedom and equality:

It followed that, since the selling of labour was itself a form of commercial operation, when employees went to work for the bosses they were not being exploited because 'any man's labour can buy the value it represents.' (72)

Significantly, Gluckstein quotes Marx (mis)quoting Proudhon. Indeed, he rarely quotes Proudhon directly, suggesting a lack of familiarity with the source material, for if he were at all familiar with it he would have known that the anarchist explained how property — wage labor — "violates equality by the rights of exclusion and increase, and freedom by despotism," resulting in the exploitation of the worker by the capitalist who employed him.⁷ Ironically, the

NOTES: 1. Emma Goldman, *My Disillusionment in Russia* (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Co., 1970), 199. 2. Donny Gluckstein, *The Paris Commune: A Revolutionary Democracy* (London: Bookmarks, 2006). 3. G.D.H. Cole, *A History of Socialist Thought* (London: MacMillan, 1961) 2: 167. 4. Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *On the Paris Commune* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1971), 270. 5. Lenin, *Collected Works* 25: 481. 6. "Freedom and Democracy: Marxism, Anarchism and the Problem of Human Nature," *Libertarian Socialism: Politics in Black and Red* (Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2012), Alex Prichard, Ruth Kinna, Saku Pinta and David Berry (eds.), 26-8. 7. *Pierre-Joseph Property is Theft! A Pierre-Joseph Proudhon Anthology* (AK Press, 2011), Iain McKay (ed.), 132. 8. Proudhon, 178. 9. Proudhon, 114.

passage Marx rips out of context and which Gluckstein regurgitates was Proudhon taunting bourgeois economists on why the surplus produced by labor was not enjoyed by the workers who created it:

Why do not the economists, if they believe, as they appear to, that the labour of each should leave a surplus, use all their influence in spreading this truth, so simple and so luminous: Each man's labour can buy only the value which it contains, and this value is proportional to the services of all other workers?⁸

Proudhon explains why this does not occur under capitalism, how selling their labor and its product ensures workers are exploited by their employers, how it is wage-labor that produces this outcome. So if the "exchange of commodities through a market system" was for Proudhon "fundamentally fair," it did *not* follow that "the selling of labour was a form of commercial operation, where employees... were not being exploited." (72) Showing his utter ignorance of the matter, Gluckstein asserts that "Karl Marx, who studied Proudhon's work carefully, had a very different analysis which located exploitation at the very heart of the capitalist production process." (72) In reality, Proudhon had argued that this was the case from 1840 onwards. He was well aware that workers produced a value greater than what they received in wages:

Whoever labours becomes a proprietor... I do not mean simply (as do our hypocritical economists) proprietor of his allowance, his salary, his wages, – I mean proprietor of the value which he creates, and by which the master alone profits... *the worker retains, even after he has received his wages, a natural right of property in the thing which he has produced.*⁹

Compare this to the "Marxist" account Gluckstein provides in which the worker "will normally create during a working day more value than his daily wages with which the capitalist has purchased his or her labour power." (72) In this, Marx was echoing Proudhon rather than presenting a different analysis:

I have shown that every labour must leave a surplus; so that, supposing the consumption of the worker to remain constant, his labour should create, on top of his subsistence, an ever greater capital. Under the regime of property, the surplus of labour, essentially collective, passes entirely... to the proprietor.¹⁰

This, obviously, is a theory of surplus value being produced in production, as recognized by more informed Marxists like John Ennenberg who notes that Proudhon's ideas "anticipat[ed] what Marx and Engels were later to call the appropriation of surplus value."¹¹ This was part of the reason why "property is theft," the other being that the appropriation of the means of life by the few placed the rest in the position of having to sell their labor (and so its product) to those who did. ("We who belong to the proletarian class: property excommunicates us!"¹²) Thus, the theft of the land



CLIVE HARPER

and workplaces needed by all to produce and live allowed the theft by the owner of the product and surplus created by labor.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, Gluckstein fails to mention an essential part of Proudhon's analysis, namely his concept of "collective force." This was "[o]ne of the reasons Proudhon gave for rejecting" property, that "collective endeavours produced an additional value" which was "unjustly appropriated by the *propriétaire*."¹³ Edward Hyams, whom Gluckstein quotes in support of his incorrect account, summarized it well enough even if he did not use the term: "The proprietor (capitalist)... cheats [his workers] abominably: for he has paid nothing for their collective effort, only for the individual effort of each."¹⁴

This is on the page *before* the one Gluckstein quotes from Hyman's book: so much for the notion that Proudhon thought "the crime [of theft] did not occur in the labour process." (72) Marx, incidentally, repeated Proudhon's analysis of the role of "collective force" in *Capital* in essentially the same fashion but without acknowledgement.¹⁵

Gluckstein explains the "Marxist" theory of exploitation in terms of "the difference between the value created by labour power once it is put to work, and the value of labour power itself." (73) Yet Proudhon had raised this in 1846 when he noted labor "is a thing vague and indeterminate in its nature, but qualitatively defined by its object – that is, it becomes a reality through its product."¹⁶ Marx, ironically, "made some disparaging remarks about this passage" yet this "anticipated an idea that Marx was to develop as one of the key elements in the concept of *labor power*, viz. that as a *commodity*, labour produces nothing and it exists independently of and prior to the exercise of its potential to produce value as *active labour*."¹⁷ Likewise Marx is quoted from 1871 on the "despotism of capital over labour" (97) yet Gluckstein fails to mention Proudhon's "property is despotism" from 1840.¹⁸ This is unfortunate because it was this despotism that allowed exploitation to occur as workers "sold their arms and parted with their liberty" when they become employees.¹⁹ Proudhon, then, was well aware of the oppressive nature of wage labor:

Thus, property, which should make us free, makes us prisoners. What am I saying? It degrades us, by making us servants and tyrants to one another.

Do you know what it is to be a wage-worker? To work under a master, watchful of his prejudices even more than of his orders... Not to have any thought of your own... to know no stimulus except your daily bread, and the fear of losing your job!

The wage-worker is a man to whom the proprietor who hires his services gives this speech: What you have to do does not concern you at all: you do not control it.²⁰

Moreover, he linked rising inequality to the exploitation produced by the hierarchical relationship created in the capitalist workplace:

I have shown the entrepreneur, at the birth of industry,

10. Proudhon, 253. 11. *Proudhon and His Age* (New York: Humanity Books, 1996), 55. 12. Proudhon, 103. 13. K. Steven Vincent, *Pierre-Joseph Proudhon the Rise of French Republican Socialism* (Oxford University Press, 1984), 64-5. Proudhon's own account can be found in *What is Property?* and is repeated in subsequent works, including *System of Economic Contradictions (Property is Theft!)*, 117-8, 212-3). 14. Edward Hyams, *Pierre-Joseph Proudhon: His Revolutionary Life, Mind and Works* (London: John Murray, 1979), 43. 15. *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy* (Penguin Books, 1976) I: 451. 16. Proudhon, 176-7. 17. Alan Oakley, *Marx's Critique of Political Economy: intellectual sources and evolution, 1844 to 1860* (Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1984) 1:118. 18. Proudhon, 133. 19. Proudhon, 212. 20. Proudhon, 248-9.

negotiating on equal terms with his comrades, who have since become his workers. It is plain, in fact, that this original equality was bound to disappear through the advantageous position of the master and the dependence of the wage-workers.²¹

Proudhon clearly saw exploitation occurring in the workplace and so his “position that property is theft locates a fundamental antagonism between producers and owners at the heart of modern society. If the direct producers are the sole source of social value which the owners of capital are expropriating, then exploitation must be the root cause of ... inequality.”²² Indeed, he linked his analysis of how exploitation occurred within production – by the appropriation of the “collective force” by the capitalist – with his calls for both association (“By virtue of the principle of collective force, workers are the equals and associates of their leaders”²³) and socialization. (“All human labour being the result of collective force, all property becomes, by the same reason, collective and undivided.”²⁴)

Gluckstein does, in passing, acknowledge Proudhon’s actual position by noting that big capitalists “could be excluded from commodity production through mutualism, or workers’ co-operatives.” (75) If Proudhon really thought that exploitation did not occur within the workplace then why did he advocate cooperatives? Why did he consistently argue for the abolition of wage labor? Simply because, contra Gluckstein, Proudhon knew that “industrial democracy,” in which “all positions are elective, and the by-laws subject to the approval of the members,” would ensure that “the collective force, which is a product of the community, ceases to be a source of profit to a small number of managers” and becomes “the property of all the workers.” Thus “workers’ associations... are full of hope both as a protest against wage-labour, and as an affirmation of *reciprocity*” and their importance lies “in the negation of the capitalist regime.” His aim was “Capitalist and landlord exploitation stopped everywhere, wage-labour abolished, equal and just exchange guaranteed.”²⁵

Even a basic awareness of his ideas would be sufficient to recognize that Gluckstein’s claim that, for Proudhon, exploitation “did not occur in the labour process” and so it “must come from outside of the commercial or capitalist relations, through force and fraud” (72) is nonsense. The notion that Proudhon was not against wage labor simply cannot stand even a superficial look at his works.²⁶

Proudhon and Associational Socialism

Like Marx,²⁷ Proudhon was well aware that the “market system” was not identical to capitalism, that “capitalist society” was marked by wage labor and that such an economic system was not the end of social evolution.²⁸ Like Marx, he repeatedly called for the abolition of wage labor (hence his consistent support for cooperatives).

Gluckstein obscures this with his flawed account of the Associational Socialism then predominant within the French labor movement. He is keen to assign the idea of socialism based on cooperatives to Louis Blanc, whom he claims “originally promoted” the idea; his ideas were “attractive to people in small workshops that operated with minimum machinery” for in these cases it was superficially plausible that the cooperatives “could win in competition with the capitalist system.” This is dismissed as “classic reformism” and doomed to failure due to “industrial development [having] rendered it impossible to out-compete the capitalist.” Marx is quoted approvingly indicating that a “workers’ government” was needed to foster a national production based on a common plan. (197-8)

This is wrong for three reasons.

The first is that Blanc did not think that cooperatives, by themselves, could out-compete capitalism. He was of the opinion it was “necessary to use the whole power of the state” to achieve the organization of labor for what “the proletarians lack to free themselves are the tools of labour” and “these the government must furnish them.” The state “should place itself resolutely at the head of industry” and “would constitute itself, by and by, as master of industry and in the place of monopoly we have obtained... association.”²⁹ That Gluckstein seems unaware of Blanc’s actual position is strange, as it is well established in the secondary literature. Moreover, if he had consulted the writings of Proudhon, he would have discovered repeated criticism of Blanc’s system because it was state-run and financed. This centralized form of association was denounced as a new form of wage-labor which simply meant replacing capitalists with bureaucrats. As history shows, Proudhon was right.³⁰

The second is that other socialists recognized the need for associations to replace wage-labor. Proudhon had also popularized the idea of workers associations (cooperatives) as the basis of socialism from 1840 onwards when he had stated managers “must be chosen from the workers by the workers themselves.”³¹ While 1851’s *General idea of the Revolution* is particularly strong on this, it can be found in almost all of his works.³² For Proudhon, the workplace must be run by “industrial associations, small worker republics” and so “industrial democracy must follow industrial feudalism.”³³ As Dorothy W. Douglas correctly noted, “the co-operative movement... syndicalism... guild socialism... all bear traces of the kind of self-governing industrial life to which Proudhon looked forward.”³⁴

The third, and most importantly, is that Blanc – like Proudhon – did *not* originate the idea of workers associations. While Gluckstein misdates the publication of Blanc’s influential work (*The Organisation of Labour*) to 1847 rather than 1840,³⁵ the fact is that “Associationism” was born during the wave of strikes and protests unleashed by the 1830 revolution. That year saw Parisian printers, for example, producing a newspaper (*L’Artisan: Journal de la classe ouvrière*) which suggested that the only way to stop being

21. Proudhon, 192. 22. Enrenberg, 56. 23. Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, *Système des contradictions économiques ou Philosophie de la misère* (Paris: Guillaumin, 1846) I: 377. 24. Proudhon, *Property is Theft!*, 137. 25. Proudhon, 610, 586, 558, 596.

26. Proudhon did oppose communism and so was, as Kropotkin discussed in “The Collectivist Wages System” in *The Conquest of Bread* and elsewhere, in favor of the “wages system” (i.e., distribution by deed, not need) but this is not identical with support for workers selling their labor to a boss. 27. “Let us suppose the workers are themselves in possession of their respective means of production and exchange their commodities with one another. These commodities would not be products of capital.” (*Capital*, 3: 276)

28. “The period through which we are now passing – that of machinery – is distinguished by a special characteristic: WAGE-LABOUR.” He denounced “the radical vice of political economy”: “affirming as a definitive state a transitory condition – namely, the division of society into patricians and proletarians.” (Proudhon, 190, 174) 29. Louis Blanc, quoted by Vincent, 139-40. 30. Proudhon, 204-6, 215-7, 296, 399, 556-7. 31. Proudhon, 119. 32. For an overview of Proudhon’s ideas on associational socialism and their evolution see Vincent’s excellent account. 33. Proudhon, 780, 610. Proudhon appears to have first used the term “industrial democracy” in 1852 when he noted “an unavoidable transition to industrial democracy.” (*La Révolution sociale démontrée par le coup d’État du 2 décembre* [Antony: Tops-Trinquier, 2013], 156) 34. “Proudhon: A

exploited by a master was for workers to form cooperatives. During the strikes of 1833, this was echoed by other skilled workers and so cooperatives were seen by many workers as a method of emancipation from wage labor long before Blanc put pen to paper.³⁶

In other words, Blanc and Proudhon simply took up the ideas expressed by workers and interpreted them in different ways. This is important because simply acknowledging that other socialist thinkers raised the idea of workers cooperatives as an alternative to wage-labor still gives credence to Lenin's notion that the working class could not come up with socialist ideas by themselves.³⁷ The opposite is the case with, for example, Proudhon picking up the term *Mutualisme* from the workers in Lyon in the early 1840s and their ideas of cooperative credit, exchange and production influenced him as surely as his influenced the Lyon workers. Thus, there was "close similarity between the associational ideal of Proudhon... and the program of the Lyon Mutualists";

it is likely that Proudhon was able to articulate his positive program more coherently because of the example of the silk workers of Lyon. The socialist ideal that he championed was already being realised, to a certain extent, by such workers.³⁸

Then there is the usual Marxist nonsense that "Proudhon wanted to return society to an earlier golden age." (73) In reality, he did not and he championed association precisely to accommodate the development of industry and large-scale production.³⁹ Yet, he was also well aware that in the France of his time artisans and peasants predominated and so any serious socialist theory and movement had to recognize this fact. Gluckstein knows this, as he admits that, in 1871, "[o]lder forms of production predominated" as well as "the prevalence of artisans and handicraft production" in Paris and elsewhere in France. (69) Yet this does stop Gluckstein – like Engels before him – labelling Proudhon anachronistic in spite of him advocating ideas applicable to the economic structure he lived in rather than, as with Marx, ones that only became dominant decades after his death. Rather than being backward looking, Proudhon tailored his ideas to the economy he faced. As Daniel Guérin summarized long ago:

Prophet of 1848: Part II," *The American Journal of Sociology* 35: 1, 54. **35.** Blanc's original articles on which the book was based appeared in *Revue du progrès* in 1839. (Vincent, 138) **36.** Bernard H. Moss, "Producer's Associations and the Origins of French Socialism: ideology from below," *Journal of Modern History* 48: 1, 73. **37.** In *What is to be Done?* (1902), Lenin argued that "there can be no talk of an independent ideology formulated by the working masses themselves in the process of their movement" and so socialist consciousness "would have to be brought to them from without. The history of all countries shows that the working class, exclusively by its own effort, is able to develop only trade-union consciousness... The theory of socialism... grew out of the philosophic, historical, and economic theories elaborated by educated representatives of the propertied classes, by intellectuals." (*Collected Works* 5: 384, 375) For more discussion, see section H.5 of *An Anarchist FAQ* (Edinburgh: AK Press, 2012), volume 2. **38.** Vincent, 164. **39.** "M. de Sismondi, like all men of patriarchal ideas, would like the division of labour, with machinery and manufactures, to be abandoned, and each family to return to the system of primitive indivision, – that is, to each one by himself, each one for himself, in the most literal meaning of the words. That would be to retrograde; it is impossible." (Proudhon, *Property is Theft!*, 194)

40. Daniel Guérin, *Anarchism: From Theory to Practice* (Monthly Review Press, 1970) 45. **41.** Proudhon, *Property is Theft!*, 583.

42. Proudhon, 732, 583, 718. **43.** Proudhon, 187.

Proudhon really moved with the times and realized that it is impossible to turn back the clock. He was realistic enough to understand that 'small industry is as stupid as petty culture' and recorded this view in his *Carnets*. With regard to large-scale modern industry requiring a large labour force, he was resolutely collectivist: 'In future, large-scale industry and wide culture must be the fruit of association.' 'We have no choice in the matter,' he concluded, and waxed indignant that anyone had dared to suggest that he was opposed to technical progress.

In his collectivism he was, however, as categorically opposed to statism. Property must be abolished. The community (as it is understood by authoritarian communism) is oppression and servitude. Thus Proudhon sought a combination of property and community: this was association. The means of production and exchange must be controlled neither by capitalist companies nor by the State... they must be managed by associations of workers.⁴⁰

Indeed, it could have been Proudhon talking when a club meeting in Paris proclaimed that the commune "will place its contracts with workers' associations which will replace the big bosses, the great companies (railway companies in particular...)" and "organise the democratic and social Republic." (104) After all, as Proudhon recalled in 1851:

I said one day, in February or March 1849, at a meeting of patriots, that I rejected equally the construction and management of railroads by companies of capitalists and by the State. In my opinion, railroads are in the field of workers' companies, which are different from the present commercial companies, as they must be independent of the State.⁴¹

While grudgingly admitting that "Proudhon's criticisms of the failing of capitalist society were sharp and won him many converts," Gluckstein also asserts, with casual abandon, that Proudhon's ideas are "easily recognisable as the precursor of neo-liberal economics today. But Proudhon's ideas were located in a different context and so took a far more radical form when adopted by the male artisan class." (72) Since when did neo-liberalism refrain from using the state to impose its reforms and skew the market in favour of the capitalist class? When has the capitalist state ever left working class people alone when they act for themselves? Equally, when has an advocate of neoliberal economics ever argued that laissez-faire capitalism meant "the victory of the strong over the weak, of those who have over those who have not"? Or denounced capitalist firms because they result in "the worker [being] subordinated, exploited: his permanent condition is one of obedience" and so people are related as "subordinates and superiors" with "two... castes of masters and wage-workers, which is repugnant to a free and democratic society" and urged cooperatives to replace them? Or suggested that "workers' association will remain a utopia as long as government does not understand that it must not perform public services itself or convert them into corporations but entrust them by term lease at a fixed rate to companies of united and responsible workers"?⁴²

Like Marx Proudhon was well aware of the role economics played in defending, justifying, rationalizing capitalism: "Political economy – that is, proprietary despotism – can never be in the wrong: it must be the proletariat."⁴³ Unsurprisingly, Proudhon had nothing but contempt for the neoliberals of his time and they for him.⁴⁴

Given that Gluckstein seems to draw almost exclusively from secondary sources to create his account of Proudhon's ideas, it comes as no surprise that he utilizes a quote by Proudhon via the unreliable J. Salwyn Schapiro⁴⁵ to suggest Proudhon was opposed

to “common ownership” when, in reality, his source wilfully mistranslates the word *communauté* (community). (75) What Proudhon meant by “community” is well-known as is his reasons for opposing it (although Gluckstein fails to mention both) and it was *not* common ownership but rather the state control which nationalization created that he opposed.⁴⁶ This can be seen when he argued that mutualism is “association, which is the annihilation of property” for while “the use” of wealth “may be divided” as “property [it] remains *undivided*” and so “the land [is] common property” and capital is “*common or collective*.”⁴⁷ As he put it during the 1848 Revolution:

under universal association, ownership of the land and of the instruments of labour is *social* ownership... We want ... democratically organised workers' associations... that vast federation of companies and societies woven into the common cloth of the democratic and social Republic.⁴⁸

So Proudhon was also for associations of associations. Fifteen years later, in 1863, he called this system an “agricultural-industrial federation” in *The Federative Principle* and this “summarised” all of his economic ideas “developed over the last twenty-five years.”⁴⁹ Even Gluckstein cannot ignore this, noting that for Proudhon “the many tiny⁵⁰ economic units would federate together... group into local communes... and then upwards into regional and finally national federations” (75) Still, he does manage to do better than Engels who proclaimed Proudhon “regarded association with positive hatred” and so “combin[ing] all these associations into one great union” was “the direct opposite of the Proudhon doctrine.”⁵¹

In summary, Proudhon favoured workers’ cooperatives (or association) as he was well aware that bosses kept part of the value produced by workers. That Gluckstein does not know this basic fact shows the superficial nature of his critique. Dependent on a selective reading of secondary sources, he ironically confirms the comments of one such author he quotes: “since [Marx’s *Poverty of Philosophy*] no good Marxists have had to think about Proudhon. They have what is mother’s milk to them, an *ex cathedra* judgement.”⁵²

Proudhon and the State

Gluckstein’s use of secondary sources ensures that he misrepresents Proudhon on numerous subjects beyond his economic theories. In terms of his political ideas, an unwillingness to discuss *why* Proudhon held these views adds to the problems this approach inherently creates.

As an example of the former, Gluckstein uses (74) Schapiro’s hostile and inaccurate article to provide his readers with a quote from Proudhon: “All this democracy disgusts me... What would I not give to sail into this mob with clenched fists!” Yet consulting the letter this is from, it quickly becomes clear that Schapiro is wilfully quoting Proudhon out of context to bolster his preposterous suggestion that he was a “harbinger” of fascism. In reality, Proudhon was bemoaning how others on the left were attacking him as “a false *democrat*, a false friend of progress, a false republican” due to his critical position on Polish independence. Unlike most of the rest of the left, Proudhon opposed the creation of a Polish state as it would not be a democracy but rather run by the nobility and so “catholic, aristocratic, [and] divided into castes.”⁵³ Context shows that Proudhon is making an ironic comment about those on the left who violate their own stated democratic principles by supporting the creation of such a feudal regime. Likewise “this mob” does not refer to “the people” as Schapiro and Gluckstein sought to suggest but rather to a group of Proudhon’s critics. Schapiro made no attempt to indicate the change in subject nor, for that

matter, even the change of page!⁵⁴

He relies on Schapiro’s hostile and inaccurate article for other false assertions, not least that Proudhon “favoured war”⁵⁵ (216) when in fact the work in question (1861’s *La guerre et la paix*) sought to explain how war could be ended once and for all, finishing with the cry “HUMANITY DOES NOT WANT ANY MORE WAR.”⁵⁶ He likewise utilizes Schapiro for his summary of Proudhon’s position on Louis Napoleon’s coup, noting that it was “bizarre” and expressed in “a pamphlet with the extraordinary title *The Social Revolution Demonstrated by the Coup d’état*” (74-5) when what is “bizarre” and “extraordinary” is judging a book (not “a pamphlet”) by its title. Suffice to say, Gluckstein’s summary leaves a lot to be desired (like Schapiro’s⁵⁷). For Proudhon, the coup “demonstrated” the Social Revolution only in so far as it showed that the situation before December 1851 could *not* be maintained and that some kind of change was possible, whether positive or negative. This, in turn, meant that Louis Bonaparte had two options – embrace the social and democratic revolution (and so end his personal power) or embrace reaction (and so maintain his personal power).⁵⁸ Or, in the words of its final chapter, “Anarchy or Caesarism.”⁵⁹ That Louis Bonaparte chose the latter was perhaps unsurprising and while Proudhon’s work is hardly his best, its arguments are not even summarized by Gluckstein who clearly has only read its title.

As well as showing the dangers of insufficient research – or doing as little research as needed to confirm your prejudices – this also highlights a key flaw of Gluckstein’s account of both Proudhon’s ideas and the anarchist critique of the Commune. Simply put,

44. “The school of Say,” Proudhon argued, was “the chief focus of counter-revolution” and “has for ten years past seemed to exist only to protect and applaud the execrable work of the monopolists of money and necessities, deepening more and more the obscurity of a science [economics] naturally difficult and full of complications.” (Proudhon, 587) All of which seems sadly too applicable today!

45. J. Salwyn Schapiro, “Pierre Joseph Proudhon, Harbinger of Fascism,” *The American Historical Review* 50: 4 (Jul., 1945). 46.

“The members of a community, it is true, have no private property; but the community is proprietor, and proprietor not only of the goods, but of the persons and wills.” (Proudhon, 131) 47. Proudhon, 93, 148, 153. 48. Proudhon, 377-8. 49. Proudhon, 714.

50. It must be physiologically significant that Leninists write about Proudhon, and anarchists in general, advocating “small” and “tiny” workplaces. Apparently size does matter and Leninists think their productive units are much, much bigger than anarchist ones. In reality, of course, anarchists advocate appropriately sized workplaces and are not hung up about their size. Marxists may fetishize large-scale production, but it does not follow that their assumption that anarchists take the opposite position and fetishize the small scale is accurate, rather we support the appropriate level of production based on an evaluation of objective requirements and the social and ecological costs involved. 51. Marx and Engels, *On the Paris Commune*, 31. 52. Hyman, 92. 53. Proudhon, *Correspondance de Pierre-Joseph Proudhon* (Paris: A. Lacroix, 1875) XI:196-7. 54. “Hal Draper on Proudhon: Anatomy of a Smear,” *Anarcho-Syndicalist Review* 77 (Fall 2019). 55. Other claims by Schapiro parroted by Gluckstein are addressed in “Neither Washington nor Richmond: Proudhon on Racism and the Civil War,” *Anarcho-Syndicalist Review* 60 (Summer 2013). 56. *La Guerre et la Paix, recherches sur le principe et la constitution du droit des gens* (Paris: Dentu, 1861) 2: 420.

57. Space precludes discussing Schapiro’s many distortions beyond noting that he presents Proudhon as having “hailed the dictatorial Second Empire” (726) in this work when, in reality, it was

68. When “common workers” are sent “to Legislative Assemblies” the result is that the “worker-deputies, transplanted into a bourgeois environment, into an atmosphere of purely bourgeois ideas, will in fact cease to be workers and, becoming Statesmen, they will become bourgeois” for “men do not make their situations; on the contrary, men are made by them.” (*The Basic Bakunin: Writings*

Likewise, Proudhon was not convinced that any centralized state socialist structure would be anything other than state capitalism: "We do not want expropriation by the State of the mines, canals

[illegible]

and railways; it is still monarchy, still wage-labour.”⁶⁹ Again, this was the case with Labour’s nationalization and, of course, under Lenin, Trotsky and then Stalin. As he had predicted, if government is substituted for private ownership, then “nothing is changed but the stockholders and the management; beyond that, there is not the least difference in the position of the workers.”⁷⁰ Replacing the private boss with a public bureaucrat did not create socialism.

This was why Proudhon advocated political, economic and social federalism so that “no longer do we have the abstraction of people’s sovereignty as in the ’93 constitution and the others that followed it, and in Rousseau’s *Social Contract*. Instead it becomes an effective sovereignty of the labouring masses which rule and govern... the labouring masses are actually, positively and effectively sovereign: how could they not be when the economic organism – labour, capital, property and assets – belongs to them entirely.”⁷¹ As well as economic association and federalism, Proudhon also urged community federalism and Gluckstein does admit that a “federation of communes” – “Free France, that is communal France in federal form,” as one Commune put it (52) – would “replace the state, as Proudhon had envisaged.” (101) Yet at the same time he asserts that “Proudhon’s approach was to focus on economics alone” and “the state had to be disregarded.” (74) Proudhon, though, was not indifferent to the State and sought ways to undermine it until such time as it would disappear – he simply recognized that political action instead of popular pressure and economic transformation from below would never result in real change. Given the subsequent history of capitalism, he seems to have had a point.

Thus it is simply untrue to claim that Proudhon “held back from dealing with the core of the system – the exploitation at the heart of the capitalist-worker relationship, and the state which exists to protect that exploitative process.” (76) He was well aware that the state was a capitalist tool and that wage labor led to exploitation.

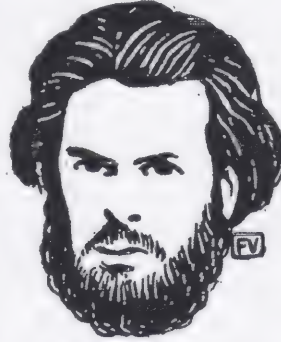
“Left Proudhonists” or Collectivists?

Rather than being at odds with Associational Socialism, Proudhon was one of its most influential advocates. His ideas found expression in working class circles during and after his lifetime and when Proudhon expressed support for workers associations as the basis of libertarian socialism he was not expressing new ideas but rather expressing a common perspective developed within working class circles and this was later reflected in the Continental European sections of the First International and within the Commune.

It comes as no surprise, then, that during the Commune, numerous workers urged the Council to promote cooperatives as the means of solving the “social question.” The Communal Council itself decreed that workshops whose owners had fled should be given to “the co-operative association of workers who were employed there.” (30) Like Proudhon, it raised the possibility that *all* large workplaces would be turned over to workers’ associations. However, the Commune (like Proudhon) was fundamentally gradualist in its approach. This failure to take a revolutionary approach was highlighted by Bakunin and subsequent libertarians as a key flaw in the Commune.

Gluckstein does seem to contradict himself by providing some praise for Proudhon, noting that the “strengths of Proudhon’s approach – his anti-authoritarianism and stress on self-organization by the working class – were adapted” by his followers. (75) This

is a significant improvement on, say, Engels who considered “anti-authoritarianism” as being total nonsense and inapplicable to modern society.⁷² He also notes that “Proudhonism had deep roots in the working class movement and laid stress on action from below.” (83) This is an improvement on Lenin who argued that “the organisational principle of revolutionary Social-Democracy... strives to proceed from the top downward.”⁷³



Eugène Varlin, one of the pioneers of French syndicalism, was murdered during the suppression of the Paris Commune.

After Proudhon’s death, militants influenced by him revised and developed many of his ideas. Based on their experiences, many became (like Eugène Varlin) organizers of trade unions and strikes as well as rejecting his patriarchal notions. Gluckstein labels these “Left Proudhonists” (134-5), but a far better term would be “collectivists” – what Bakunin initially called his politics before taking up the term anarchist. Like the French militants, Bakunin favored collective ownership, economic struggles and strikes, the expropriation of capital by unions and a decentralized, federal social organization based on communes and workplace associations. Yet this is hardly a radical departure as may appear at first for these militants sought to extend Proudhon’s “agricultural and industrial combination” from just cooperative credit and workplaces to trade unionism. That Proudhon had rejected this position does not mean denying the obvious links between the “left mutualists” (collectivists) and his ideas.

By not presenting an accurate account of Proudhon’s ideas, Gluckstein also presents a false picture of the theoretical influences within the International and inflates that of Marx in the process. As G.D.H. Cole notes, the French Internationalists, including Varlin, were

strongly hostile to centralisation. They were federalists, intent on building up working-class organisations on a local basis and then federating the local federations. The free France they looked forward to was to be a country made up of locally autonomous communes, freely federated for common purposes which required action over larger areas... In this sense they were Anarchists.

1869-71 [Prometheus Books, 1994], Robert M. Cutler (ed.), 108).

69. Proudhon, 378. This position was first raised in *What is Property?* and its critique of “community” alongside property. He essentially argued that state communism (the only kind that existed then) would mean “the community is proprietor, and proprietor not only of the goods, but of the persons and wills.” (Proudhon, 131) 70. Quoted by Ritter, 167-8. 71. Proudhon, 760-1. 72. See “On Authority” (*The Marx-Engels Reader* [W.W. Norton & Co., 1978], Robert C. Tucker (ed.), 730-3). For a critique of his argument, see section H.4 of *An Anarchist FAQ*.

73. Ironically, “the organisational principle of opportunist Social-Democracy” was “to proceed from the bottom upward, and, therefore, wherever possible... upholds autonomism and ‘democracy,’ carried (by the overzealous) to the point of anarchism.” (Lenin, *Collected Works* 7: 396-7) 74. Cole, 140, 168. 75. quoted by Julian P. W. Archer, *The First International in France, 1864-1872: Its Origins, Theories, and Impact* (University Press of America, Inc., 1997), 196. 76. Schulkind (ed.), 63-4. 77. “Another View: Syndicalism, Anarchism and Marxism,” *Anarchist Studies* 20:1 (Spring, 2012).

78. Archer, 186. 79. *Anarchism: A History of libertarian ideas and movements* (Penguin Books, 1986), 263. 80. Michael Bakunin, quoted by Guérin, 20. 81. Bakunin, *The Political Philosophy of Bakunin* (New York: The Free Press, 1953), G.P. Maximov (ed.), 313.

Varlin “had at bottom a great deal more in common with Proudhon than with Marx” and had a “Syndicalist outlook.”⁷⁴

To quote Varlin himself, unions have the enormous advantage of making people accustomed to group life and thus preparing them for a more extended social organisation. They accustom people not only to get along with one another and to understand one another, but also to organise themselves, to discuss, and to reason from a collective perspective.

As well as mitigating capitalist exploitation and oppression in the here and now, the unions also “form the natural elements of the social edifice of the future; it is they who can be easily transformed into producers associations; it is they who can make the social ingredients and the organisation of production work.”⁷⁵

While such views can be found in Bakunin’s writings, nothing like this can be seen in Marx’s, so Gluckstein suggesting the correspondence between Marx and Varlin “is surely significant” in refuting the “[m]any recent historians [who] feel the need to deny any Marxist influence in Paris” (210) is clutching at straws. The notion that Varlin was a Marxist cannot be squared with him warning that “placing everything in the hands of a highly centralised, authoritarian state... would set up a hierarchic structure from top to bottom of the labour process.” Rejecting state ownership he had, like Proudhon, suggested that “the only alternative is for workers themselves to have the free disposition and possession of the tools of production... through co-operative association.”⁷⁶

As can be seen, Varlin’s position was close to Bakunin’s—perhaps the fact that Marx also corresponded with the Russian Anarchist shows a “Marxist influence” in his ideas? This is an example of the many times Gluckstein seeks to bolster Marx’s influence in a revolution and an International section where little existed. Yet, the similarities with Bakunin’s ideas are obvious, although they go unmentioned by Gluckstein as Marxists regularly ignore the obvious links between Bakunin’s ideas and what later became known as syndicalism.⁷⁷ Unsurprisingly, when Bakunin met Varlin at the International’s Basel Congress and, “once the program of the Alliance was explained to” Varlin, he said he “shared the same ideas and agreed to co-ordinate with their revolutionary plans.”⁷⁸ “Varlin

82. While, significantly, the local Bolsheviks opposed the initial protests (just as Marx opposed attempts to rise in insurrection during the Franco-Prussian war).

83. Kropotkin once noted that any French revolution would start as a “political” one, as revolutions were “not made to order” but “however the revolution began, it would not stop with a mere change of government” and “attempts at expropriation” would start. (*The Conquest of Bread and Other Writings* [Cambridge University Press, 1995], 211)

84. Peter Kropotkin, *Direct Struggle Against Capital* (Edinburgh: AK Press, 2014), 461. Both Russian Marxist fractions viewed the events of 1905 as a “bourgeois” revolution and so limited their aims to purely political transformation and argued workers should seek social change once a republic had been achieved.

85. *The Paris Commune of 1871: The View from the Left* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1972), Eugene Schulkind (ed.), 32-3, 33. 86. Marx and Engels, *On the Paris Commune*, 31. 87. *Michael Bakunin: Selected Writings* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1973), Arthur Lehning (ed.), 198. 88. Woodcock, 239.

89. For a good account of the rise of revolutionary anarchism within the International, see Robert Graham’s *We Do Not Fear Anarchy? We Invoke It: The First International and the Origins of the Anarchist Movement* (Oakland/Edinburgh: AK Press, 2015).

and the French Bakuninists,” George Woodcock notes, “had also [like the syndicalists] recognised before the Paris Commune the role of the trade unions in social struggle, and the general strike.”⁷⁹

Equally, Gluckstein considers Varlin’s work in overthrowing the Empire as being in contradiction with Proudhon’s apolitical stance. Yet he forgets that Proudhon built barricades and utilized the skills of his trade to print the first Republican proclamation in the 1848 revolution and, of course, successfully stood for election a few months later (although the experience did, as noted, confirm his anti-parliamentarianism). Likewise, anarchists are well aware that republics can offer more opportunity for activity than dictatorships, that the “most imperfect republic is a thousand times better than the most enlightened monarchy... The democratic system gradually educates the masses to public life”⁸⁰ and so the “International does not reject politics of a general kind; it will be compelled to intervene in politics so long as it is forced to struggle against the bourgeoisie. It rejects only bourgeois politics.”⁸¹ Anarchists took part in the protests which overthrew the Tsar in February 1917⁸² as well as in Spain, 1931 (for example). The key is that they participated in such events to push them further, to turn them into social revolutions rather than purely political ones.⁸³ This was the position of Kropotkin during the 1905 Russian Revolution: “Together with the whole Russian people we fight against autocracy. At the same time, we have to work in order to broaden our struggle and fight simultaneously against capital and against the government.”⁸⁴ This was Varlin’s position as well when he noted that “for us political revolution and social revolution are interdependent” and “in view of all the obstacles we now meet we feel that it will be impossible for us to organise the social revolution so long as we live under a government as authoritarian as the present one.”⁸⁵

For Engels in 1891, “the Commune was the grave of the Proudhon school of socialism.”⁸⁶ Yet the evidence suggests otherwise—the “Proudhon school” had transformed long before March 1871 and continued to do so afterwards in the form of collectivism. Varlin, in other words, was part of the general development on the libertarian movement from reformist mutualism towards revolutionary collectivism, from Proudhon to Bakunin (so to speak). For Bakunin, his ideas were “Proudhonism widely developed and pushed to these, its final consequences.”⁸⁷ However, this is not to say that without Bakunin this would not have happened for Varlin “seems to have moved independently towards his collectivist position.”⁸⁸ In other words, Bakunin became influential because he was part of a general development within Internationalist circles, ideas which he helped deepen but was also influenced by.

So, given Varlin’s links with Bakunin and the similarities in their politics, Gluckstein is right to state that “Varlin showed what could be achieved” (84) but not in the sense he meant it. It was precisely the rise of the “collectivism” that Bakunin and Varlin subscribed to which finally forced Marx to move the General Council to America.⁸⁹

To Be Continued

Ukraine: Coal Miners Occupy Mine, Demand Back Pay

123 miners staged an underground occupation in defiance of the authorities in the Lugansk separatist “republic” in eastern Ukraine.

The Komsomolskaya pit, in the mining town of Antratsit, was occupied June 4 to demand that wages for March and April be paid. Authorities blockaded the mine to keep supporters from bringing in food and water, and arrested supporters distributing information on the dispute.

Chile's Uncontrollables

REVIEW BY MARTIN COMACK

Marion E. Schlotterbeck, *Beyond the Vanguard: Everyday Revolutionaries in Allende's Chile*. University of California Press, Oakland, 2018, 234 pp., \$34.95 paper.

In September of 1970 the Socialist Salvador Allende Gossens was elected president of Chile, candidate of a Popular Unity coalition formed by Socialists, Communists and other leftist elements. Allende had won election by a razor thin plurality of votes and had to be installed in office by the Chilean Congress. His administration thereby proceeded on a "Chilean road to socialism," beginning with some nationalizations of large-scale industry and the resumption of a moribund land reform, all within the context of constitutional legality. But the victory of Popular Unity, quite unexpectedly, was the signal for a wave of spontaneous workplace occupations and seizures of landed estates across the whole country – outbreaks beyond the control of the government or its political partners that could not be contained within the more careful limits of Allende's program and its admonition to "go slowly." These popular mobilizations were perhaps comparable in intensity and fervor to the revolutionary upsurge that swept across Barcelona and the province of Catalonia at the beginning of the Spanish Civil War.

Both Allende and the Chilean Communist Party – the most conservative of his Popular Unity partners – reacted with surprise and confusion, denouncing the seizures of factories and estates and insisting that the workers and peasants were being manipulated by irresponsible "ultra-leftists" or right-wing provocateurs. Only the officials of the new administration could provide the proper



guidance, without which workers were incapable of managing their own affairs or acting effectively in their own interests. But the militant workers and landless peasants of Chile had taken the Popular Unity slogans of "Socialism" and "Democracy" at face value, and saw no reason why these principles could not immediately be put into practice by direct action, nor could they understand why "their" government would not allow them to do so.

The peasant communes formed militias to defend themselves, self-governing working class neighborhoods – *cordones industriales* – sprung up in the urban areas — sites of dual power outside of local and national government control.

It was in the city of Concepcion and surrounding towns, the area covered in Schlotterbeck's extensive researches, where Chile's "everyday revolutionaries" probably came closest to their ideal of social revolution – perhaps the most advanced and well-developed example of self-management and popular control ever seen in the Western Hemisphere. Located about halfway down Chile's long Pacific coast, Concepcion and its immediate environs had a history of radicalism and regional identity dating from the early 19th century when the rebel Bernardo O'Higgins declared national independence from the municipal plaza. Concepcion, like the other port cities of Chile, was home to thousands of members of the IWW at the beginning of the twentieth century, and the site of waves of labor insurgency that followed for decades. With its long tradition of working class militancy in its factories, mills and mines, it was here that a communal radicalism would spread and produce grass-roots organs of popular power apart from and often in opposition to Allende's Popular Unity state.

Maintaining a distance from the new administration but most eager to begin the socialist transformation of Chile was the most avowedly radical of the Chilean leftist organizations – the MIR (Movimiento de Izquierda Revolucionaria – Movement of the Revolutionary Left). Originally formed of student dissidents from the Chilean Communist and Socialist parties and claiming to be the real vanguard of social revolution, Schlotterbeck notes that "the MIR's methods and goals were more about promoting popular participation than overturning the state" (12), and despite Leninist rhetoric displayed an "anarchist radical syndicalism" (42) in its Concepcion branch that would prove most congenial to local militants. The *miristas* from the local university shared both an ideological identity and geographical proximity with the workers and shantytown *pobladores* of the area, and melded into a strong cross class alliance that emphasized mass participation, assembly-based decision making and direct action in creating a new social order. As the MIR maintained a widening distance between itself and the Popular Unity government, so did the locally based *miristas* resist domination by their more hierarchial Political Commission based in Santiago that suppressed open discussion and ignored procedures of internal democracy. A student member noted that in Concepcion the MIR "was less as a Leninist party like in Santiago

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and more like a mass party.” (141) One trade unionist claimed that he came to know the Santiago leadership “from the inside ... their excesses ... their ambitions for power, above all their ambitions to be protagonists and to order people around.” (137)

The rank-and-file unionists of the CUT (Central Unica de Trabajadores de Chile – Central Union of Chilean Workers) now demanded an active role in the revolutionary process – one made by popular assemblies and not dictated by union or government officials. Nationalization meant one thing to the Allende administration and quite another to militant workers. Despite resistance by Communist Party officials, union members called for participatory democracy and open discussion in their local meetings and for immediate improvements in their pay and working conditions – including shared management and shared profits. A union leader explained how a strike at his textile factory over threatened layoffs developed into an occupation and takeover, “new machinery ... tripled or quadrupled the productive output. If there was going to be greater production and the owner’s profits would triple, how could it be that half of us were going to be laid off? It was absurd ... so we took the factory.” (55) As one *mirista* observed, “You take power not when you stop production but when you are capable of producing without a boss.” (131)

The great value of the author’s work is her extensive use of the testimony and reminiscences of the local participants in what became the transformation of their daily lives and the lives of those around them. Her study is not a mere political narrative, of which many have been written, but a most affecting record of her informants’ experiences in popular assemblies, *campamentos* and workers councils – experiences going far beyond simply voting for one or another political party. Schlotterbeck notes that “Support for the MIR grew when its political actions had a direct impact on the way people lived, which in turn empowered individuals to conceive of themselves, their neighbors, and their rights in society in new ways.” (62) A university student from Concepcion recalled how “we lived those years with a lot of passion” and how her experiences in the popular movement “shaped my life forever.” (16) A *mirista* remembered how “For me ... the People’s Assembly was a fiesta, a kind of catharsis in which the *pueblo* took center stage and offered their perceptions, their dreams, their criticisms” (114).

In September of 1973 a military coup restored traditional social relations in Chile and established the dictatorship of General Augusto Pinochet. With heavy weapons, tanks and aircraft, and aided by the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency and the Nixon-Kissinger White House, the Chilean armed forces crushed the ill-armed resistance of workers and peasants. Their problem really wasn’t Allende, but rather the deep-rooted and nation-wide mass movement for popular democracy that had erupted and gone far beyond the control and original intentions of his Popular Unity government. For its suppression brute force was required. The number of people “disappeared” by the Pinochet regime has been numbered at 30,000, with some 40,000 jailed and 200,000 forced into exile. Capitalist property was restored, neoliberal economic policies implemented and human rights eliminated.

But decades later the boast of a retired textile worker may yet be accurate: “We didn’t change power relations, but we changed the Chilean people.” (162) In October of last year some one million of them, sponsored by the current leftist movement Frente Amplio, turned out in Santiago to demand economic and social reform. Most were peaceful but violent attacks were made on banks and super market chains – over thirty demonstrators were killed by the

★ REVIEWS ★

police and thousands arrested. Latin American scholars have often observed the lack of party identification on the part of Chilean citizens. Schlotterbeck notes how the marching song of the Popular Unity years – “*El Pueblo Unido Jamas Sera’ Vencido!* (the People United Will Never Be Defeated!)” – has now been replaced by “*El Pueblo Unido Avanza sin Partido!* (The People United Go Forward without Parties!)” (166). A national referendum is to take place this year. Its result may be a new Popular Assembly.

Spanish Anarchists in the United States

Christopher J. Castañeda and Montse Feu, eds., **Writing Revolution: Hispanic Anarchism in the United States**. University of Illinois Press, 2019.

Writing Revolution is an anthology of articles about the contributions of Spanish-speaking anarchists in the United States, with an emphasis on the Spanish language press. Essays cover the history of anarchism from the 1880s to recent times, showing how immigrants from Spain and Latin America played an important role in labor organizing and spreading anarchist ideas on both coasts and in the Midwest. Besides well-known figures like Ricardo Flores Magon and Luisa Capetillo, lesser-known activists like Pedro Esteve, Jaime Vidal and Caratina Piña are covered, as well as the periodicals they wrote for and edited. Contributors include Jon Bekken, Christopher J. Castañeda, Jesse Cohn, María José Domínguez, Montse Feu, Sonia Hernández, Antonio Herrería Fernández, Jorell A. Meléndez-Badillo, Javier Navarro Navarro, Michel Otayek, Sergio Sánchez Collantes, Kirwin R. Shaffer, Susana Sueiro Seone, Alejandro de la Torre and David Watson.

All of the articles are of high quality and worth reading. One of the articles I found especially interesting was Jon Bekken and Mario Martín Revellado’s “Spanish Firemen and Maritime Syndicalism, 1902-1940,” which credits Spanish seamen with the organization of the IWW’s Marine Transport Workers union and the IWW in Chile. Another thought-provoking article was by Jorell A. Meléndez-Badillo, “The Anarchist Imaginary: Max Nettlau and Latin America, 1890-1934,” an account of how the anarchist historian maintained a correspondence with Spanish-speaking anarchists throughout North and South America, and collected their literature to such an extent that Nettlau was relied upon as a clearing house for information about what other Spanish-speaking anarchists were doing throughout the scattered movement.

The last three articles in the collection deal with the efforts to support the 1936 revolution in Spain and the revolutionary exiles. These chapters are “Keepsakes of the Revolution: Transnational Networks and the U.S. Circulation of Anarchist Propaganda during the Spanish Civil War” by Michel Otayek; “España Libre, 1939-1977: Anarchist Literature and Antifascism in the United States” by Montse Feu; and “Federico Arcos (1920-2015): An Iberian Anarchist Exile” by David Watson.

This is an important contribution to our understanding that anarchism in the United States was a movement of multiple languages and ethnicities, and may be a guide to how it can rise again. Certainly, organizing the anarchist movement along linguistic lines makes more sense than organizing around nation-states. [JS]

Capitalist Brutality and the Dehumanization of the Working Class

REVIEW ESSAY BY RIDHIMAN BALAJI

James Bloodworth, *Hired: Six Months Undercover in Low-Wage Britain*. Atlantic Books, 2018.

Each generation we tell ourselves that class is dead, yet with every generation we fail to dispose of the cadaver. – James Bloodworth

Bloodworth describes *Hired* as a book about “working-class life in the twenty-first century ... an attempt at a documentary about how work for many people has gone from being a source of pride to a relentless and dehumanising assault on their dignity.” (Preface) No occupation should be considered superior to any other, and all workers should be treated with the same level of dignity and respect whether a job requires physical or intellectual work. The unfortunate reality is that these values are not universally embraced. Despite being one of the richest countries in the world, Great Britain continues to brutalize and dehumanize its working class.

Bloodworth writes about his experiences as a low-wage worker for six months. Starting out as a “picker” at an Amazon warehouse, and ending up as an Uber driver, Bloodworth provides a frank account about the hardships of working-class life.

Capitalism and the system of “scientific management” has rendered the working-class mere “inputs” or “factors of production” whose output is measured the same way as machines. This utterly degrading perspective of looking at humans as mere tools of production goes back to Frederick Taylor’s *The Principles of Scientific Management* (1911). Bloodworth argues that many workplaces, Amazon in particular, continue to enforce Taylorist productivity targets in order to maximize efficiency.

In addition, many low-wage workplaces do not provide workers with a fixed number of working hours, instead opting for “zero-hour contracts” where work schedules fluctuate from 0 to full-time (or more), often with little notice. According to the UK’s Office of National Statistics, in 2019 there were 896,000 zero-hour contracts. The British Trade Unions Congress estimates that by the end of this year, over a million people will be on zero-hour contracts, accounting for approximately 3% of the labor force.

Low-wage work under capitalism

Bloodworth begins in Rugeley, West Midlands, where he starts off as a “picker” for an Amazon warehouse. Although management claimed to provide workers with two 15-minute breaks, workers were unable to rest for the entire duration of their break-time:

Over the course of a normal day, workers were entitled to one break of half an hour and two ten-minute breaks. The half-hour break was unpaid but the shorter breaks were paid. The ten-minute breaks were actually fifteen minutes in total, but an extra five minutes (which you were not paid for) was tacked on ... to account for walking from the further reaches of the warehouse to the canteen. In practice it took around seven minutes to walk from the back of the warehouse (ten football pitches, remember) and through the airport-style security scanners to the break area. When the two minutes it took to get back to the pick desk at the end of the break were factored in, the ‘fifteen-minute break’ totalled about six minutes. (Chapter 3)

Generous break time for physically demanding work is absolutely essential for workers’ physical and mental well-being.

Nevertheless, theft of break-time is a minor example of the assault on the humanity of low-wage Amazon workers. Apart from the physical exhaustion, mental stress and interpersonal abuse, perhaps the most egregious attack on the workers’ dignity comes from the precarious nature of the work itself. Bloodworth was not even hired by the company. “Amazon’s recruitment process ran strictly through two agencies – PMP Recruitment and Transline Group. I landed the job at Amazon through Transline. ... I was never given a copy of my actual employment contract, and was eventually told by a Transline rep that a contract did not exist.” (Chapter 1)

A recent report by Reveal, a non-profit investigative journalism organization, determined that Amazon’s rate of serious injuries for its fulfillment centers was “more than double the national average for the warehousing industry: 9.6 serious injuries per 100 full-time workers in 2018, compared with an industry average that year of 4.” Amazon pickers who fail to meet productivity targets, even by 1%, receive a written warning for the first offense. A local newspaper, *The Morning Call* (Allentown, Pennsylvania), revealed that in 2015 that as temperatures soared above 100 degrees Fahrenheit, an Amazon warehouse refused to open garage doors to let the air circulate because management was worried about theft. Instead, ambulances were stationed outside, ready to treat workers who suffered from dehydration or other forms of heat stress.

After Amazon, Bloodworth worked as a domiciliary care worker in Blackpool, North West England. Here he faced difficult conditions caring for the elderly. The care sector is particularly starved for workers. “[C]ompanies like this were so desperate for staff [because] few of the people who started ever stuck around for long. The turnover rate in the care sector was 25.4 percent, meaning that around 300,000 care workers left their positions every year.” Workers are expected to change catheters and administer medication; the smell of urine and other bodily fluids is pervasive. As a care worker, Bloodworth did sign a contract, however, it was another zero-hour contract. It stated clearly, “There may be times when no work is available for you and Carewatch has no duty to provide you with any work at such times or any payment in respect of such times.” (Chapter 6) The contract strictly prohibited collective bargaining and the formation of a union.

Care work involves a significant level of emotional stress.

The spectre of death lurked in the background too like a dark shadow. There were the sweet old men and women you inevitably become close to – you saw them almost every day, sometimes for years on end. And then you might check your rota one day and, where previously there was a familiar name, there was a blank space. Death was a blank sheet of paper and you were moved on. (Chapter 8)

Bloodworth notes that domestic care work is a disproportionately gendered occupation where women are expected to go beyond their regular duties and responsibilities as caretakers and perform unpaid, indirect care work such as cooking, cleaning, buying groceries, gardening, etc. A 2019 report by the OECD reveals that around 75% of unpaid care and domestic work – classified as non-market, unpaid activities carried out in households – is done by women and girls around the world. According to the OECD repository Gender, Institutions and Development (2014), women spend on average three to six hours daily on unpaid care activities,

while men spend between half an hour and two hours. (Ferrant *et al.* [2014], *Unpaid Care Work.*)

Bloodworth then moved on to a call center:

The worst aspect of the job – and the downside to most work of this kind – was the sheer tedium of it. You sat in a swivel chair from eight till five taking call after call after call from customers who were (somewhat predictably) unhappy with the amount of money leaving their bank accounts. ... I took home very little money, and I was supposed to get through on sweets, chocolates, a few perks – discount rates at the gym, shares – and a big end-of-year party, where a free bar (not bad, granted) and cameos by second-rate celebrities would lift our hearts even if they could not pay our rent. In three years' time I might receive a pay-out from the shares, but that would depend on how they performed in the meantime, which I had very little power to affect. (Chapter 12)

Like domestic care work, call center work is also highly gendered, around 71% of the global call center workforce is female. This work is a particularly fast-growing industry in developing countries like India and the Philippines.

Overseas call center workers are asked to mask their identity and adopt a westernized, American identity. They are asked to learn about American culture, TV shows, movies, literature, etc., and to undergo training in voice modulation and accents, so as to give the appearance that the call is taking place in the same country where the service is being provided. (Press Trust of India [2017], *Abuse and Stress: What Indian BPO workers have to undergo on a daily basis.*)

In the wake of the Coronavirus pandemic, the U.S. Department of Homeland Security designated call center work as “essential,” hence employees were expected to show up at work, putting their own health at risk. Many call center employees are expected to work despite the constant risk of infection while receiving little in paid sick leave or childcare assistance. Hamilton Nolan of *In These Times* reported that a Consumer Cellular call center in Arizona “kept hundreds of people in the call center working in close quarters even as it has shuttered its corporate headquarters in Portland, Oregon.” (Call Center Workers Fear For Their Health as They Work in “One Big Germ Pool”)

Towards the end of *Hired*, Bloodworth writes about his experience as an Uber driver in London. The gig economy is perhaps the most precarious sector of the economy. In Great Britain, the gig economy accounts for 4.7 million workers, many of whom are self-employed and legally regarded as independent contractors. (Parrrington [2019], *Gig Economy in Britain Doubles*, *The Guardian*) Independent contractors such as Uber drivers are not entitled to a minimum wage and are ineligible for other benefits such as holiday pay. In September 2019, the state of California passed Assembly Bill 5, which compelled businesses like Uber and Lyft to classify their workers as employees, rather than as independent contractors. Uber sued, arguing that it is a technology company – not a transportation firm – and so exempt from the law. The absence of a federal gig-economy law also allows Uber to avoid payroll taxes. Furthermore, if drivers are misclassified as independent contractors, Uber has no obligation to provide benefits such as health insurance or vacation pay. Uber also does not abide by minimum wage laws, or permit its drivers to form a union.

Unionization drives and efforts to achieve better working conditions by Uber drivers across the globe have yielded mixed results. In May 2019, the U.S. National Labor Relations Board ruled that the company's drivers are contractors, not employees.

In Canada, 300 Uber Black drivers successfully unionized and joined the United Food and Commercial Workers to bargain for sick days and vacation days. (Mojtehdzadeh [2020], ‘We will win the vote.’ Uber Black drivers file motion to unionize with Ontario labour board. *Toronto Star*)

Dignified vs. Meaningful Work

Although *Hired* does a good job shining a light on the systematic impoverishment of the working class, Bloodworth fails to address the various ways in which we can examine the production process. Two possible ways to analyze the production process are to assess the extent to which work is a) Dignified and b) Meaningful.

By failing to differentiate between these two, Bloodworth levies an ambiguous attack on the capitalist production process. For example, it is unclear whether Bloodworth is suggesting that the problem is that Amazon workers lack a sense of purpose in the work they are doing, or whether he is suggesting that the work itself is degrading. Is low-wage work problematic because it does not provide opportunities for personal growth? Or because the work is boring and workers do not achieve a sense of fulfillment from their work? Perhaps the problem is that “unskilled” workers do not receive the same level of recognition as “skilled” workers who do what is commonly viewed as more sophisticated work.

Nor does Bloodworth compare his experience with low-wage workers employed in worker-owned, labor-managed firms. How do the management practises of such firms differ from those at Amazon? How different is executive compensation? Do workers feel a sense of dignity and respect at these workplaces? Of course, even if you transform all private firms into democratic firms, there is no guarantee that the work itself is socially useful. Consider a privately owned firm that constructs oil pipelines. Then suppose this firm is converted into a democratic, worker-owned firm. Does this make the work being done socially useful?

Bloodworth spends a fair bit of time analyzing the structure of his compensation during his time as a low-wage worker. Although pay is important, it gives readers the false impression that the problem rests solely with the level of compensation. The problem is more systematic. Amazon's management practices are designed under a market framework that values increases in output over dignified and meaningful work relations. Readers would also have benefited by learning about the experiences of refuse collectors, street cleaners, and those involved in “dirty work.”

Hired shines a bright light on some of the most shameful and reprehensible aspects of capitalist production in Britain. Bloodworth fails to mention, however, the draconian anti-union laws that make it extremely difficult for workers to establish unions and go on strike. He also fails to differentiate between meaningful and dignified work, adding a level of ambiguity with respect to his examination of low-wage work. Most importantly, Bloodworth stops short of advocating for workers to seize control of their workplaces and transform the work they do. Workers need not tolerate abuse at the hands of their bosses.

The Press' War on Workers

BY JON BEKKEN

Christopher Martin, *No Longer Newsworthy: How the Mainstream Media Abandoned the Working Class*. Cornell University Press, 2019, 272 pp., \$27.95, hardcover.

This important book documents how the mainstream media have abandoned the working class – in news coverage, in their

conception of society, and even as customers. While labor always got short shrift from the mainstream media, every urban daily used to have at least one journalist on staff charged with covering the labor beat, and the business office actively reached out to workers as subscribers (and hence as audiences they sold to advertisers). Even a newspaper like the *Chicago Tribune*, which called for hanging labor organizers on its editorial page, ran several labor stories in its pages every week. Today, only a handful of media cover workers at all, and too much of the coverage focuses not on workers' concerns but rather on how "consumers" (conceived of as the public) are inconvenienced by strikes and protests.

Martin explores this from a number of angles: the bizarre (and often completely wrong) coverage of Trump's claims to speak for workers (including a careful dissection of the shoddily constructed Carrier myth); the emergence of systematic labor coverage in the 1870s and its dramatic decline in the 1970s and 1980s; the decision by newspaper business offices to abandon working-class readers in favor of upscale audiences more desirable to the advertisers who were the main source of newspaper revenue, a strategy that took on increased importance in the 1970s as consolidation wiped out competition in most cities – often eliminating newspapers with larger, but less profitable, readerships; the rise of the consumer frame for what labor coverage survived, reducing workers to secondary actors in their own stories; and rhetorical strategies by politicians and business interests that disappeared the very concept of a working class from polite discourse (replacing it with occasional references to anodyne "working families," a formulation pioneered by Ronald Reagan) and portrayed regulations that protected workers and the environment as "job killers" even while celebrating the actual job killing capitalists as they looted the economy and destroyed millions of jobs.

The final chapter calls for rethinking coverage of workers and their struggles, encouraging journalists to focus on inequality, poverty wages, corporate and CEO looting, and reaching out to workers as both sources and subjects – returning the working class majority to its rightful place in the news. In the middle there is a discussion of how many full-time \$15-an-hour jobs could be created through policies aimed at the real job-killers, the plutocrats: nearly 24 million, if you total up the funds that could be realized by reining in "excessive" executive compensation (defined as more than \$1.3 million a year – 29.9 times the average workers' pay) and recovering corporate profits and personal wealth hoarded in offshore tax havens. These calculations are of course incomplete, relying as they necessarily do on publicly disclosed figures which exclude many firms.

Martin notes that this is just one question inquisitive journalists could raise as they explore the world of the elite job-killers. Instead, journalists echo the bosses' talking points. He closes with an examination of the great Twinkies crisis, as journalists reported on the collapse of Hostess Brands – largely accepting management's claims that they had no choice but to close because unionized workers had gone on strike. Hostess's second bankruptcy filing – necessitated by years of corporate looting and not maintaining its facilities – and demand for another round of deep concessions forced the strike

(half the workforce had already lost their jobs, and labor costs had been cut by \$110 million a year over a decade of give-backs; so of course the bosses wanted more). The Twinkie, unfortunately, from a public health standpoint, is still with us, but 6,800 of the remaining 8,000 workers lost their jobs (including every worker in the one plant that reunited after the vulture capitalists took control), the pension plan is bankrupt after years of corporate looting, and the venture capital firms that bought Hostess' snack

cake brands for \$186 million has moved on after pocketing \$2.3 billion from the now heavily indebted company (most of those "profits" weren't from operations, but rather from borrowing) during the four years they owned it. And yet, nearly two-thirds of news stories blamed the workers and their unions for the debacle.

The 2018 Red Wave of teachers' strikes received more sympathetic coverage, perhaps because journalists found it easier to identify with teachers, and their demands were more easily understood as promoting a clear public good. Even here, the coverage

spoke to decades of neglect as reporters expressed shock at textbooks that were 25 years old, collapsing buildings and similar issues that a commitment to ongoing labor coverage would have revealed.

Martin argues that the media's disregard for the working-class majority has seriously undermined the industry, as potential audiences can no longer recognize themselves or their lives in a journalism increasingly pitched to economic and political elites. Amidst the ongoing wave of retrenchment, newspapers that haven't had anyone covering labor for decades still have several reporters working the business desk. A vibrant labor press in many cities once helped fill some of these gaps, and gave workers both access to information and a channel through which their voices could be heard.

There are serious consequences to workers' invisibility, both for the possibility of democratic discussion and for our access to basic information. The world we see depicted in the news bears witness to the lives and concerns of our rulers, but ignores the majority except when we rise in rebellion. Martin does a solid job of identifying the problem, but does not offer a path forward. Fundamentally, we cannot rely on the bosses to tell our stories (even if they might be better served by a journalism that was in touch with the lives of the majority); rather, we need to rebuild labor media – to speak for ourselves, and to build movements capable of forcing a different conversation.

Sustainability or Greenwash?

FILM REVIEW BY JEFF STEIN

Planet of the Humans. Narrated and directed by Jeff Gibbs. Produced by Michael Moore. Rumble Media, 2019. Available on YouTube.

Planet of the Humans is a documentary created by environmentalist Jeff Gibbs on climate change. According to Gibbs, the idea that fossil fuels can be replaced by renewable energy without major changes to society is an illusion. Capitalism relies upon constant economic growth in order to maintain profits on the one hand and on the other to provide a consumerist lifestyle for a majority in the industrialized countries. Wind and solar power are not advanced enough to provide the energy needed for economic growth without continuing to use fossil fuels. What may even be worse is an effort to replace some fossil fuel use with "green fuel,"



lumber, plant and animal wastes, used tires and garbage, so-called “biomass,” which may be renewable but does nothing to reduce greenhouse gases being spewed into the atmosphere.

Gibbs convincingly argues that most environmental organizations are aware of the insufficiency of wind and solar to meet current and future energy needs, but sell this illusion to their followers. Many environmental leaders including Al Gore, Robert Kennedy Jr. and Bill McKibben (a regular contributor to Democracy Now) have gotten into alliances with David Blood of Goldman-Sachs, Richard Branson, Mike Bloomberg, the Koch brothers and other billionaires to promote “green energy” as part of stock portfolios mixed with fossil fuel stocks and other major polluting industries. The environmental leaders justify this because they depend on the billionaires for funding. The documentary includes excerpts from speeches given by these “eco-luminaries” to oil corporate audiences where they promote green energy as providing opportunities to expand oil and gas sales.

The documentary has not been received well by the environmental movement. Some of the criticisms are valid, others not so much. Gibbs underestimates the potential of wind and solar power. Much of that is the fault of the way it is being used. New, more environmentally friendly materials could be used to make wind turbines and solar panels. Energy can be stored in other ways than relying on batteries. I watched a documentary on solar power being used on an island where excess power was used to pump water uphill to a reservoir so that during the night the water in the reservoir was released and used to power a water turbine while the water flowed downhill. I am sure that if workers and engineers were given the opportunity, they could find other ways to use solar power at night. Same is true for wind power on calm days. Plus, there is no reason why solar and wind couldn’t be connected together for increased probability that when one wasn’t producing electricity, the other would.

Those who focus on the technical issues, however, are missing the main point: capitalism cannot go on forever without destroying the planet. Growth is the grease that lubricates the capitalist gears but will never put an end to inequality. It is easier to get growth by increasing our reliance on energy than by employing labor. Unlike labor, nature does not fight back against exploitation and demands placed on it can go well beyond the limits of sustainability. The role of protecting nature has to be played by humans, but when the environmental movement allies itself with the capitalists, it ceases to play this role.

Economic Planning as a Reconfiguration of Capitalism

REVIEW BY RIDHIMAN BALAJI

Leigh Phillips and Michal Rozworski, *The People’s Republic of Walmart*. Verso, 2019, \$16.95, 256 pp., paper.

The People’s Republic of Walmart asks whether Walmart is an institution which progressives can use to build a more egalitarian society. Major multinationals like Walmart and Amazon have become increasingly technically sophisticated, employing complex computer algorithms to solve “optimization problems.” Can this technology be appropriated by progressives to build a more emancipatory and liberatory society? For the authors, the answer is yes, however, their arguments suffer from numerous drawbacks.

The authors note that their goal is not to celebrate Walmart, but rather to capture its operational efficiency and use it to build

an egalitarian and liberatory society. They argue that the defining characteristic of existing capitalist societies is the free market. Something profitable using the free market, they note, is not necessarily socially useful. They cite the absence of a universal public healthcare system in the U.S. as an example: “Healthcare for all would be wonderfully useful. But because it is not profitable, it is not produced.”

Phillips and Rozworski point to democratic planning as an alternative, arguing that a more democratic version of central planning could help allocate resources more efficiently. Economic planning has a long history, dating back to the ancient Mesopotamians, whose complex economic record-keeping might be described as an early, rudimentary version of economic planning. The authors argue that despite the fact that “ancient planning was at the service of an economic system created for the benefit of a small coterie of elites who were motivated to maintain their wealth and power,” there are many lessons which we can learn from the failings of the ancients. Ultimately, for Phillips and Rozworski, centrally planned economies are not desirable because they are not democratic.

The next chapter does a good job of summarizing the “socialist calculation debate,” polemics between various Austrian and Marxist economists in the early 20th century. Chapter 3 examines how contemporary neoclassical economic theories conceal hierarchical social relationships and delegate decision-making authority to wealthy owners and bosses. Since their interests do not coincide with those of workers, bosses have a vested interest in implementing policies that increase firms’ operational efficiency without taking into consideration the physical and mental well-being of their workers. The authors also discuss an odd conception of “freedom” promulgated by Hayek, arguing that he is not so much after freedom, but rather “freedom for information and money” – two central lubricants of market activity. For the authors, Hayek plays a central ideological role in debates about the feasibility of economic planning.

Chapter 4’s focus is on Amazon; the authors examine its use of complex math and computer science to carry out its operations all around the world. Due to its sheer scale, Amazon integrates its supply chains with those of other producers to ensure that sufficient quantities are produced and arrive to stores as needed. As a result, it is compelled to use complicated algorithms in its planning process in order to solve “optimization problems,” allowing Amazon to determine how much of a given product it should produce in order to supply its entire distribution network.

Chapter 5 looks at how capitalist enterprises rely heavily on a financial system that is thoroughly integrated with central banks. The government uses monetary policy to “ration investment” in order to manage expectations and diminish uncertainty with respect to the business environment, and plays a major role as the entrepreneurial agent carrying out investments in risky circumstances.

Nationalization alone is insufficient. Using the case of the British National Health Services, Chapter 6 argues that public institutions can plan and prioritize public interests and overcome the desires of capitalists to derive profits from every economic opportunity. Despite numerous attacks the NHS has faced from conservative administrations, chronic underfunding, and the imposition of market reforms, the authors argue that a more systematic reform of capitalist society can occur by embedding institutions such as the NHS with democratic decision-making processes.

In Chapter 7, the authors challenge the conventional claim that the Soviet Union was socialist. “While the replacement of the market with planning is a necessary condition for an egalitarian society,

it is not a sufficient condition. Planning must be democratic.” A deeply authoritarian state like the Soviet Union never aspired to a more egalitarian society, and the Bolsheviks never implemented workers’ control, on either a workplace or societal level.

Chapter 8 is perhaps the most problematic. The authors discuss how Soviet economists planned the economy using first material balance sheets, and then Input-Output analysis. Their attribution of the method of Input-Output analysis to Marx is problematic. Chapter 9 builds on this, exploring the field of “cybernetics,” the use of computer science to develop decentralized economic planning. The authors discuss Project Cybersyn, initially conceived by Chile’s Allende in the early ’70s. However, the project was never resumed after his overthrow in 1973.

In Chapter 10, the authors discuss how democratic decentralized economic planning can be applied to tackle problems pertaining to the environment. From decarbonizing agriculture to integrating renewables, they argue that democratic planning could be extremely useful for implementing system-wide reforms and addressing underlying biological problems. They end their book by writing that planning works, is already ubiquitous in our society, and that sophisticated algorithms are already used by large-scale firms like Walmart and Amazon to increase productivity. However, the authors stress that democracy is paramount for their proposal to implement decentralized economic planning.

Input-Output Analysis

In Chapter 8, the authors summarize Input-Output analysis this way:

An input-output table offers a simplified representation of the flows of inputs and outputs among industries, and ultimately consumers. It is, in effect, a spreadsheet: each horizontal row represents how a particular industry’s output is used as an input by another industry and consumers, while each vertical column represents all the inputs used by any one industry. The table demonstrates quantitatively the dependence of each industry on all other industries. An increase in Lego output requires an increase in input of plastic, and hence an increase in plastic production. ...

Although [Leontief] published the first input-output table in a 1936 paper, Leontief himself said that more rudimentary versions of such tables had been produced in the nineteenth century by economist Léon Walras, or even in the eighteenth century by François Quesnay (his *Tableau économique*) – and, indeed, by Marx. (Chapter 8)

For Phillips and Rozworski, Marx’s schemes of reproduction are essentially the same thing as Input-Output systems. Although they are quite right that Input-Output tables were used extensively by Soviet economists, attributing this method to Marx himself is hotly contested. Recently, a new interpretation has challenged the Input-Output formulation. According to Kliman and McGlone (“A Temporal Single-system Interpretation of Marx’s Value Theory,” *Review of Political Economy* 11:1, 1999, 33–59), Marx expresses figures corresponding to Constant Capital, Variable Capital and Surplus Value in money terms, where physical quantities are not specified. Although Marx measured value itself using monetary figures, labor-time figures such as 20 hours of labor-time determined the amount of value. Since physical quantities are not specified, specific quantities of commodities such as 1 ton of gold or 3 bushels of wheat are not relevant to Marx’s scheme. Thus, there is no hypothetical “value system” from which production prices are derived, there is only a singular value-price system. The Input-Output formulation of Marx’s schemes of reproduction is

Physicalist, specifying physical quantities, and Simultaneous, that is, consisting of a system of equations where input and output prices, as well as the rate of profit, are determined simultaneously.

It is important for anti-authoritarian socialists to detach Marx’s economic theories from his political program. His theoretical apparatus in *Das Kapital* is useful in illuminating authoritarian private property relationships under capitalism. Moreover, having an accurate understanding of Marx’s theories is important for constructing a rival theoretical paradigm with respect to the dominant neoclassical school of thought. Unlike Marx, bourgeois economists don’t acknowledge the exploitative arrangement between capitalists and workers. Many critics (and some writers seeking to support their own views by giving them a more distinguished lineage) often attribute things to Marx that he did not actually say. Although the authors are free to interpret Marx’s reproduction schemes as being essentially the same as Input-Output systems, this interpretation significantly departs from Marx’s own theories. Nevertheless, Input-Output analysis is a useful tool for civil servants, which they can use to help track the resources needed to meet specific goals.

Democratic Planning is Not Enough

The main drawback of *The People’s Republic of Walmart* is the authors’ claim that their democratic planning proposal is fundamentally “not capitalist.” In their conclusion, they write, “Without a thorough democratization of any postcapitalist planning apparatus, we risk creating new unfreedoms.” While this is certainly true, democratic planning simply appears to be a different configuration of capitalism, one that leaves capitalist property relations and the separation between manual labor and planning intact. This would not do anything to restrict the ruling class from using the state to crush working-class opposition.

While the term “capitalism” has not always been explicitly defined, it is loose enough that countries like the former Soviet Union and China can be described, rightly so, as “capitalist.” In Chapter 51 of *Capital* (vol. 3), Marx provides a useful criteria for distinguishing capitalist modes of production from non-capitalist modes. For Marx, there are two defining features of the capitalist mode of production: production of commodities to satisfy human wants, and the production of surplus value. The first is that it produces commodities, products “outside us,” which are sold to satisfy human wants. The second is that “production of surplus-value [is] the direct aim and determining motive of production.”

Certainly economic planning, especially if it is carried out democratically, might have its own benefits. However, transforming our society into one that is democratically planned would not alter these defining features of the capitalist mode of production or eliminate the exploitative arrangement between capitalists and workers with respect to private property. Classhood, who gets to be in what class, is a function of one’s relationship to labor-power. Capitalists have the exclusive right to derive use-value from labor power, workers cannot do the same by virtue of their class position. Democratic planning does not eliminate the Capitalist-Worker class distinction, a defining feature of capitalism.

Building a non-state alternative

The proposal to transform market economies into democratically planned economies does not address the various ways in which capitalists rely heavily on the coercive instruments of the state. Under capitalism, exploitation occurs in part because capitalists are able to use police protection and the threat of violence to prevent workers from seizing control of the workplace.

The authors want something “between state and markets,” something to replace capitalism, but also something that runs its operations as efficiently as Amazon and Walmart. However, it’s not clear why Walmart’s operational efficiency is intrinsically desirable; operational efficiency (as the primary determinant of social value) is a characteristic of psychopaths.

This analysis ignores the hardships of work life under maximally efficient, highly monitored, automated surveillance systems. It seems quite unlikely that workers would voluntarily choose to subject themselves to such a regimented workplace, absent coercive mechanisms. But since the authors would retain the state to carry out administrative work, enforce laws, and make sure the plan is abided by, the instruments of coercion would be close at hand should workers refuse to follow the plan.

Economic planning in combination with markets could be very useful in ameliorating the worst aspects of capitalism. But this is not the same thing as eliminating capitalism. The authors would maintain commodity production, alienated labor and exploitation. For them, socialism is more about finding an alternative to distribution of goods through markets, rather than alienation of workers under capitalism or self-management.

Workers simply cannot seize the means of production and operate the firm themselves as long as there exists a coercive security apparatus which capitalists can use to subjugate their workers. Economic planning, even in a more “democratic” form, shifts the decision-making process to state officials, thereby disempowering workers. State officials cannot support the workers and capitalists simultaneously, as the interests of capitalists are antithetical to those of the workers. Thus, despite the authors’ intentions, their democratic planning scheme is likely to bolster state centralism and preserve authoritarian social relationships.

Building an alternative to capitalism requires workers to develop autonomous, non-state institutions, based on mutual cooperation. Developing such institutions, which operate outside of the purview of the state, will reduce the capacity of the ruling class to use its violent security apparatus to crush working-class mobilization.

People’s Republic of Walmart is a serious book that asks important questions about alternative ways to organize and allocate resources. However, a close inspection reveals numerous problems. What the authors present as a “postcapitalist” alternative to existing market economies is merely a rearrangement which preserves capitalist institutions. Under this system, individuals would still satisfy their human wants and needs by consuming and producing commodities. The project of converting market economies into democratically planned, decentralized economies does not in itself abolish the exploitative arrangement between capitalists and workers. As long as capitalists retain their ability to control and profit from labor power, exploitation and the theft of surplus value will continue, and work will continue to be a sphere of alienation.

LETTERS

Thanks for what you do; ASR is one of my favorite publications, a rare gem in a media landscape of bullshit. Anon.

The back cover of #79 is terrific. I’m not sure what the non-English words mean, but I read in general strike now. The more articles on strikes and preparing for strikes the better. Rick Hartnett

I hope you are all doing well in these trying times. I feel that I have grown old with ASR. That I may continue in that path would be so much the better.

Mutual Aid & Solidarity

continued from page 16

has made it clear that garbage collectors, bus drivers, grocery store workers, delivery drivers, and teachers are essential to the proper maintenance of society. CEOs, investment bankers, landlords, speculators are of no purpose.

Green Syndicalism

Green syndicalism, meshing radical ecology with radical labor organizing, is an approach to social ecology that stresses connections between the destruction of nature and exploitation of the working class, the domination of Indigenous people and territories, as rooted in production for profit and private accumulation. Both ecological justice and social justice require a participatory reorientation of production and exchange based on collective needs, not profit.

It is not all of humanity that is the virus, as some narratives have gone, it is a system that uses up nature and the labors of working people to enrich financially small numbers who claim ownership over both land and labor.

COVID-19 has opened a view into the social impacts of ecological crisis which will be magnitudes greater as climate crisis grows – and if there is a push for a “return to normal.” It reinforces that the impacts are felt unequally – by poor, Indigenous, working class people – not by billionaires. It shows that resources that are produced collectively and socially must be shared collectively and socially.

Green syndicalism stresses the skills that working class people have, as the ones who do the work, in reorienting production toward ecologically and socially just and sustainable practices. One example in Canada has been tar sands workers calling for a shut down of the tar sands and advocating for reclamation, cleanup, and restoration work (which, as well, means more work over a longer period of time). Guided by the Indigenous communities whose territories are being destroyed.

Some have already connected these dots and there have been calls for a general strike already. #GeneralStrike was the top trend on social media for a couple of days in mid-March. And some strikes have happened, including actions by services workers and delivery drivers (such as Amazon and Purdue Farms workers).

Perhaps a more telling example occurred when miners walked out at Hudbay’s Lalor mine in northern Manitoba over their COVID-19 concerns after contractors were flown into town following a request by the town council that the company suspend air travel into the region.

Some Indigenous communities in British Columbia (unceded territories) set up blockades to stop tourists from entering their territories during the crisis.

Green syndicalism, which places emphasis on the industrial capitalist causes of ecological crises and the possibilities of reorienting social relations to stop destroying nature, and human communities, while meeting human needs equitably, and the emerging examples of mutual aid and solidarity toward those ends, is a needed counter to the exterminism of ecofascism and Wall Street pundits alike.

This essay originally appeared on the blog of the Political Studies Association- Environmental Politics Group

May all be safe and solidarity be with you, Mark Nevin

Thanks again for your work on putting out the magazine. We continue to appreciate the results of your efforts and hope that this anonymous donation will help. Best libertarian greetings...

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